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PLENARY MEETING

Wednesday, 1 December 1993
at 3 p.m.

NEW YORK

President: Mr. INSANALLY
(Guyana)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Ouedraogo (Burkina Faso), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.20 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 34

THE SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST

(a) REPORTS OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (A/48/522, A/48/607)

(b) DRAFT RESOLUTION (A/48/L.32)

The PRESIDENT *(interpretation from French)*: I should like to propose that, if there are no objections, the list of speakers in the debate on agenda item 34 be closed at 4.30 p.m. today.

It was so decided.

The PRESIDENT *(interpretation from French)*: I therefore request those representatives wishing to participate in the debate to inscribe their names on the list of speakers as soon as possible.

Mr. YAACOBI (Israel): Mr. President, in addressing you and the Assembly, may I also address the former President of Israel, Mr. Yitzhak Navon, who is with us here today in the visitors' gallery.

After more than 40 years of cold war and polarization the people of the world are striving to build a better future, trying to overcome ethnic, religious and national conflicts. In Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union young democracies are struggling to lay the cornerstones of peaceful and prosperous futures. In Western Europe the European Union has drafted a plan of great vision. Together, these countries are building prosperous lives on the solid basis of regional cooperation.

In the Middle East too historic changes are breaking down the battlements of a century of conflict and war. As we look forward to an era of prosperity and cooperation, I think back to a time when Jews and Arabs flourished together 1,000 years ago in Spain, when we shared a Golden Age. Now, the time has come for us to seize the opportunity to create a new Golden Age, to enjoy the right to our own lives and destinies. Now it is time to lay the foundations for peace, stability, security, economic progress and human advancement in the embattled Middle East.

We broke ground 14 years ago with the Camp David Accords, the first peace treaty between Israel and an Arab State. This year, on 13 September, on the same table upon which we sealed those Accords, we signed the Declaration of Principles between Israel and the PLO. On 14 September Israel and Jordan signed an agenda for negotiations towards a peace treaty. We thank the United States for the constructive role it has played in all these achievements, and we thank the Russian Federation, Norway and all the others whose support has helped encourage these developments.

These political breakthroughs must be accompanied by economic growth and development in order to build a stable peace. Economic progress and human progress are twin pillars that will support the political achievements.

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ENGLISH

On 1 October 46 countries and organizations came together at the International Donors' Conference in Washington, D.C. They pledged $2 billion over five years to finance social and economic development in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. The United Nations established a high-level Task Force to achieve the same goal. This financial backing ensures that the agreements will stand firmly on two legs, one political and one economic.

Israel and the Palestinians are facing opposition, but we believe that those who look to the future will prevail over those who are trapped in the past. We both focus now on implementing the Declaration of Principles. Together, our coordinating committees are hammering out the details of implementation according to the agreed timetable.

We are making progress with the Palestinians and 13 other Arab delegations in multilateral negotiations as well. There, we are creating opportunities for regional cooperation. Forty-seven countries and international organizations, including the United Nations, are participating in the multilateral talks. Five working groups are discussing refugees, arms control, regional economic cooperation, water, and environment, respectively. Alone, each country can do little about those issues, but together we can make great progress.

For the first time, all States participating in the talks on regional economic development agreed on a plan of action. In that plan 35 projects, workshops and studies in diverse areas will be started. For the first time in the multilateral negotiations, talks about the Middle East among the countries of the Middle East are being held in the Middle East. Egypt acted as host to the environment working group in mid-November; Tunisia welcomed the group on refugees a month earlier; in April 1994 the working group on water may convene in Oman.

For the first time, we are seeing true breakthroughs in both the bilateral and the multilateral spheres. But our work is nowhere near completion. The peace process would be greatly helped by a summit in Damascus or Jerusalem between President Assad of Syria and Prime Minister Rabin of Israel. Let us create another psychological and political breakthrough, as Egyptian President Sadat did when he came to Jerusalem in November 1977.

Let us enjoy a quiet, secure border with Lebanon. Israel has no territorial claims in Lebanon. We look forward to a peace treaty and hope that the Lebanese Government will assert its sovereignty and disarm the terrorists who use its land as a base for attacks on Israel.

We also call upon King Hussein of Jordan to sign a peace treaty with Israel. As Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres said in this Hall:

> "... we live side by side with the Jordanian Kingdom, and what is so obvious geographically must become clear politically." *(Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-eighth Session, Plenary Meetings, 6th meeting, p. 22)*

A treaty would put the capstone on the advances we have already made towards peaceful relations between our countries. We desire a comprehensive peace, based on individual treaties with the Gulf States, the North African States, and all other Arab and Muslim countries.

I want to express my regret over the expressions of violence, the many injuries and the losses of human life, and over the absence of restraint and tolerance, despite the opening of new horizons before us all. I believe that the difficult situation will pass. I believe that all sides know that we have passed the point of no return and are on our way to a new era of peace, security, and economic and social progress.

During yesterday's debate I said:

> "Of course, there are, and will be, ups and downs in the process. This is a time of transition, but now is the time to realize the simple truth: We can choose either painful compromise or perpetual conflict. The implementation will succeed if both parties work persistently, pragmatically and professionally towards this end. I believe both sides are proceeding in this spirit, despite moments of hardship and outbreaks of violence." *(Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-eighth Session, Plenary Meetings, 66th meeting, pp. 1-2)*

Let us progress quickly, for threats to peace will grow with time. Nuclear proliferation and an arms race cast long shadows over the Middle East, and dangerous Muslim fanatics threaten to bring a dark age to the region.

Iranian-backed groups such as Hezbollah, Hamas and the Islamic Jihad have targeted the peace process and its Arab and Israeli supporters. This is part of their broad strategy to destabilize the entire region and fulfil their dreams of expansion and domination. When we signed the Declaration of Principles with the PLO, and the world welcomed our progress with a shower of blessings and warm wishes, the fanatics responded with a hail of threats and violence. Together with all responsible, moderate forces in the Middle East that seek a better future, we shall

fight terror with all our might and we shall pursue peace with all our resolve.

Albert Einstein once said:

"The world is a dangerous place to live - not because of the people who are evil, but because of the people who don't do anything about it."

It is time for the United Nations to support the peacemakers by adopting an attitude that reflects the changes in the Middle East. When bitter enemies take bold steps towards reconciliation, the United Nations must give its support and encouragement. We and the Palestinians have together chosen our road to peace and we ask the United Nations to support this choice.

It is time to remove from the agenda resolutions that contradict the Declaration of Principles. It is time to abandon obsolete, anachronistic resolutions that do not reflect the new realities in the Middle East. Resolutions wielded as political weapons at the height of the Arab-Israeli conflict have no place in this era of negotiation and reconciliation. In their place let us adopt resolutions that contribute to peace and demonstrate that the United Nations will rise to the challenges and opportunities of a changing world. I am pleased that a new draft resolution was submitted yesterday by the United States, Russia and Norway, supporting the peace process and its achievements, and calling for international assistance, regional cooperation and a comprehensive peace.

Four Israeli soldiers remain missing in action: Tzvi Feldman, Zechariah Baumel, Yehuda Katz and Ron Arad. We call upon those countries and organizations holding them to abide by international law, display humanitarian sensitivity and bring them home.

We also call upon our negotiating partners to lay down economic weapons and end the Arab boycott. The boycott can never be accepted, and certainly not when we are advancing peace. The boycott is an obstacle to peace that impedes prosperity and hurts all societies in the Middle East.

Arabs and Israelis should profit from economic cooperation, not suffer from economic warfare. Let us unite to create a better future, a future of peace and security, economic growth and social advancement. In this future, at least part of the $70 billion we collectively waste on weapons and belligerency will be invested in human progress. Science, education, health and technology will advance as we divert human energies and resources away from conflict. Economies will thrive as peace and stability generate growth and open opportunities for joint ventures. Consumer demand will increase as we shift funds from the military to the civilian sector. The threat of war and instability will no longer scare away foreign investment and tourism. In this new era we will raise the standard of living and improve the quality of life for all.

Israelis and Arabs will prosper together through cooperation. Indeed, with the Copenhagen Action Plan agreed in November we have already begun. We can integrate our infrastructure: seaports and airports, roads and railways, electricity grids and energy plants. Cairo, Jerusalem, Amman, Beirut and Damascus were all joined by road and rail before 1948. We will renew these links and we will create new ones. Commercial trucks will stream across borders on new highways. Tourists will flow from country to country on commercial flights and modern trains.

In Eilat, Aqaba, Gaza and Ashkelon we can build free trade zones that draw investment and create jobs. Israel and Jordan should jointly develop and maintain one deep-water seaport and one modern airport on the tiny strip where Eilat and Aqaba meet on the Red Sea. A new railway will become an overland bridge connecting the port in the Gulf of Eilat with ships in the Mediterranean Sea.

Open borders for tourism will bridge the gulf of understanding and create the economic interests to preserve tranquillity and peace. Nature and history have endowed our region with many wondrous attractions. Pilgrims of three religions seek their spiritual roots in Hebron, Jerusalem, Bethlehem and Mecca. Vacationers flock to Tel Aviv and Sharm-el-Sheikh for beautiful beaches under blue skies and balmy weather, and travellers marvel at the incredible sights of Luxor, Petra, Baalbek and Timna. Cooperation in tourism will generate hundreds of thousands of jobs, strengthen our economies and fortify peace.

We shall reap great benefits if we sow the seeds of peace and cooperation now. Speaking at a dinner in honour of Israel's Prime Minister, Yitzhak Rabin, the Secretary-General of the United Nations said:

"Now there is a new moment in time ... We have seen that negotiations can work ... We have seen a small seed of trust start to take root."

We still face difficulties as we make the agreement a reality. The enemies of peace are trying to prevent our success. But we will continue striving to achieve a comprehensive peace in the Middle East. Peace is the foundation of security, regional cooperation, economic development and personal advancement. This is our

obligation to future generations - to the young, to our children. This is our obligation to ourselves, to our moral conviction. This is our obligation to the nations and people we represent. Let the international community represented here work in the same spirit, with the same sense of obligation and with the same dedication to this great goal.

Mr. ALLAGANY (Saudi Arabia) *(interpretation from Arabic)*: The question of the Middle East still causes concern and anxiety to the international community as a whole. We have witnessed over the past few months developments which we hope will prove to be important steps towards a comprehensive, just and durable settlement to the Palestinian question and the Arab-Israeli conflict. In fact, the possibility of reaching a peaceful settlement in the Middle East did improve to a large extent with the launching of the peace process, in 1991, in Madrid, with the participation of all the parties directly concerned.

The other important fact today is that the international community has now reached consensus on the main principles of comprehensive settlement in the Middle East - namely, the withdrawal of Israel from the occupied Arab territories, including Al-Quds and the Syrian Golan, in implementation of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973); the implementation by Israel of Security Council resolution 425 (1978), which stipulates withdrawal from southern Lebanon; respect of the right of all countries in the region to live in peace within secure and internationally recognized borders; and recognition and implementation of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, especially its right to self-determination.

Optimism has been generated by the Declaration of Principles that was signed by the PLO and the Israeli Government in Washington on 13 September 1993, despite its limited character in the sense that it is an agreement on self-government in the Palestinian territories, beginning in Gaza and Jericho and a first step towards the establishment of a comprehensive, lasting and just peace between Arabs and Israel. The agreement generated optimism because it is only natural that it will contribute to the settlement of the Palestinian question, which is the core of the Israeli-Arab conflict and will, thereby, contribute to a settlement between the Arabs and Israel.

This Palestinian-Israeli agreement has been widely welcomed in Palestinian, Arab and international circles. That welcome is an expression of a true desire for the establishment of peace in the Middle East. However, we believe that welcome should be accompanied, on the part of the international community, by the provision of the economic and developmental support needed for the establishment of the administrative structures that are required for the successful implementation of the agreement on self-government.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia took part in the International Donors' Conference that was held in Washington and announced that it would contribute $200 million in 1994 to support the economic and security infrastructures in the Palestinian territories. We believe that the international community must realize that the provision of such support is extremely necessary for the successful implementation of the agreement on self-government.

The consolidation of the underpinnings of peace in the Middle East requires the achievement of concrete results in respect of the main issues - especially that of Al-Quds, which is part of the occupied Arab territories. A matter that gives us cause for concern and anxiety today is the ruling, a few days ago, by the Israeli Supreme Court that the Al-Aqsa Mosque is an integral part of the land area of the State of Israel and that all maintenance and restoration works in the Mosque are subject to Israeli building and planning regulations and, antiquities laws.

This means that the Israeli occupation authorities intentionally interfere directly in the affairs of the Holy Mosque. This will lead to extremely serious conflicts in the Holy City. This new ruling constitutes a blatant violation of the status of the Al-Aqsa Mosque and an encroachment on the competence of Islamic Waqfs, and a naked violation of United Nations resolutions relating to the position and status of Jerusalem, which declares as null and void any measures which purport to alter the legal status of the Holy City. The resolutions to which I refer include Security Council resolutions 252 (1968) and 267 (1969).

Israel must take confidence-building measures and demonstrate goodwill and good intentions as regards the settlement of the problems in the Middle East. These measures should embrace all the occupied Arab territories, including the Syrian Golan, and should include withdrawal from southern Lebanon. The question of the settlements and the return of the Palestinian refugees should be given the highest priority in the Middle East peace process.

Jewish extremists want to build 130 new settlements on the West Bank, Gaza and the Golan Heights, in addition to the 203 settlements now in existence. The council representing the settlers call this plan "This is My Country". According to today's issue of the Israeli newspaper *Yedioth Ahazonoth*, it is a plan aimed at halting the withdrawal. All of these are omens that do not augur well at all for a security situation that is deteriorating in a manner which the news media have been bringing home to

us over the past few days. For this reason, we underscore the need for the Israeli occupation authorities to undertake confidence-building measures aimed at securing true peace in the region, instead of measures that will undermine and erode confidence and dispel hope in any settlement or peace in the region.

We in Saudi Arabia look forward to the day when security and stability will prevail in the region and hope that it will again be the oasis of prosperity and human progress that it was once before.

Mr. NOTERDAEME (Belgium) *(interpretation from French)*: The convening of the Madrid conference in October 1991 gave rise to hope for a new future for all the peoples of the Middle East. That hope began to be fulfilled on 13 September 1993 with the signing at Washington of the Israeli-Palestinian agreement, which the countries members of the European Union have hailed as a decisive turning-point in the peace process that has been under way for two years. To our mind, that agreement opens up broad prospects for a negotiated political solution to the entire Israel-Arab conflict. As for the European Union, it is committed to continuing to play an active, constructive and balanced role in the peace process. In the context of its foreign policy and common-security policy, the European Union intends to take common action to complement the Middle East peace process, by mobilizing the Union's political, economic and financial resources to support a comprehensive peace plan.

Cleaving to long-standing positions of principle, the European Union is firmly resolved to support the recent Israeli-Palestinian agreement both politically and economically. We intend to participate in any international arrangements it may engender and have undertaken to supplement our current programme of assistance with substantial financial commitments to enable the benefits of the agreement to be felt where the needs are the most urgent.

The success of the Israeli-Palestinian agreement - which is itself the outcome of a long process of talks brought to fruition by the courage and foresight of Israeli and Palestinian leaders - must now pave the way to a comprehensive peace in the region, a goal to which we are especially committed. The European Union hopes that there will be progress in the framework of other bilateral and multilateral talks on future cooperation. In that connection, we hope that Syria and Lebanon will now participate in these endeavours on the multilateral track of the peace process.

The European Union is following with keen interest the improving situation in Lebanon - although a renewal of tension there last summer showed yet again how fragile stability in that part of the Middle East will remain without a comprehensive settlement. We continue to press for the full restoration of the sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of Lebanon, and reaffirm our firm support for the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL). We stress again that the Force must be able to fulfil its mandate in the safest possible conditions.

The European Union wishes again to state that Iraq must comply without delay with all provisions of the relevant Security Council resolutions. We hope that, in order to regain its place in the international community, Iraq will comply with all its obligations. But we are obliged to note that the situation to date is negative, as shown by Iraq's lack of respect for the inviolability of its international boundary with Kuwait and for that country's sovereignty in general. The policy of systematically repressing the Shiite community in the southern marshes and the continuing economic blockade against the northern provinces make the situation all the more discouraging. Moreover, Iraq must agree to the implementation of Security Council resolutions 706 (1991) and 712 (1991), whose provisions are aimed at improving the living conditions of the civilian population of Iraq. The European Union welcomes Iraq's recent official unconditional acceptance of Security Council resolution 715 (1991). We hope that Iraq will commit itself to cooperate with the Special Commission and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) as part of the implementation of monitoring and verification plans.

With respect to the common effort against the scourge of international terrorism, the European Union is committed to Libya's full and prompt implementation of Security Council resolution 883 (1993).

The European Union is concerned at Iranian authorities' rejection of the Israeli-Palestinian agreement of 13 September. We hope Iran will abandon its negative position on that historic agreement and will speedily assume its proper role in promoting a comprehensive peace for the benefit of all the States of the region. Our concerns lie also with the fundamental rights and freedoms of individuals and minorities in Iran. We continue to view the continuation of the death sentence imposed by *fatwa* against the writer Salman Rushdie as a clear violation of human rights and international law. Moreover, the European Union expects more transparency from Iran, with a view to ongoing monitoring of that country's acquisition of weapons of mass destruction.

I wish to conclude by stressing the firm commitment of the European Union to an active quest for lasting, comprehensive peace and stability for the benefit of all in

the Middle East. We shall continue to spare no effort to assist in reaching a comprehensive settlement in that region, a region to which we are bound by many past and present links and to which we feel very close.

Mr. ELARABY (Egypt) *(interpretation from Arabic)*: Our debate on the situation in the Middle East takes place at an important juncture in the region's history. The peace process that started in Madrid has borne fruit, in that it has led to a nascent agreement between the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and Israel on mutual recognition, and to the adoption of the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements. Progress has also been made on the Jordanian-Israeli negotiating track in that an agenda for negotiations between those two countries has been signed.

The fact that direct negotiations have begun and that such negotiations have resulted in an agreement according to which the withdrawal of Israeli forces from some of the occupied Palestinian territories will begin is cause for optimism, and gives us grounds for hope that the agreement will be a first step towards the full implementation of the true substance of the frame of reference of the peace process, namely Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), that true substance being the establishment of a just and comprehensive peace which includes withdrawal by Israel from all the Arab territories it occupied in 1967 and the exercise by the Palestinian people of its legitimate national rights.

We do not believe that it is overly optimistic to hope that progress will be made also on the Syrian-Israeli negotiating track toward complete peace between the two countries through the restoration of Syria's full sovereignty over its occupied lands in the Golan Heights. We are confident that the march towards peace is indivisible. We believe that, if the parties have the desire and sincere intentions, all the peoples of the region will come out in full support of any sacrifice required to reach a comprehensive peace.

It was said of some States in the past that they could not bear the burden of fighting a war on more than one front. However, it is difficult to justify delaying the march towards peace under the pretext that the struggle for peace could not be engaged on two or three fronts at one and the same time.

Egypt has striven for peace in difficult circumstances and has had to make many sacrifices, which have not deterred it from pursuing that option. Today, the provisions of the peace treaty between Egypt and Israel which embody the sound interpretation of the peace-for-land formula, remain a mighty beacon and a model to be followed. It could be argued that, if it were not for the success of that pioneering experiment, the current peace process could never have been launched and would never have been destined to succeed.

Egypt attaches special importance to the multilateral negotiations on disarmament which, we hope, will lead to the achievement of the objective Egypt has striven for in the General Assembly and in other forums, namely a Middle East region that is free from nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction.

Egypt has called for the renunciation of the concepts of hegemony, military superiority and the occupation of territories as a means of ensuring security. We have continued to reaffirm that comprehensive peace is the only true guarantee of the security of all parties. Under a comprehensive and lasting peace, the threat of the proliferation of nuclear weapons continues to cast a shadow that threatens the future of the entire region. Egypt, therefore, calls upon Israel to enter into serious negotiations on nuclear disarmament, to subject its nuclear facilities to international guarantees and to accede to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

Egypt is actively participating in the multilateral negotiations on regional cooperation in the Middle East as it believes that those negotiations could provide the incentive for all parties to achieve progress in bilateral talks towards that desired regional cooperation. Egypt has hosted recently the working group on the environment in the context of the multilateral negotiations.

We hope that we shall soon be able to view the United Nations documents on the Middle East as texts of reference in the study of history. We look forward to a future wherein the United Nations would play a fundamental role in assisting all the peoples of the Middle East to develop their economies and to improve their standards of living. We believe that the role the United Nations could play in supporting the Palestinian people in its first steps towards a just and comprehensive peace could be an example of that desired future role of our international Organization.

We believe we are close to achieving that objective. However, we need the international community's full support. Egypt, for its part, continues to do its utmost in helping along the peace negotiations. It now hosts the ongoing Palestinian-Israeli talks on the implementation of the Declaration of Principles and is urging Israel and the other parties to make similar progress on the other tracks. We hope that the General Assembly will continue firmly to support the principles upon which a just and comprehensive settlement of the struggle in the Middle

East must be based. We hope and believe that such a settlement will contribute largely to the creation of a new reality in the Middle East that would allow the region to regain its ability to participate in the progress of mankind.

Mr. PARAMESWARAN (Malaysia): The General Assembly has been seized of the issue of the Middle East conflict for almost as long as the United Nations has been in existence. Integral to this issue is the question of Palestine. Despite various efforts to find a comprehensive, overall settlement of this very complex problem, involving the interests of the Palestinian people, represented by the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), and of a number of countries in the region, it is unfortunate that peace has eluded us.

The signing of the recent Declaration of Principles between the PLO and Israel relating to the West Bank and the Gaza Strip marks a new breakthrough in the steps towards a comprehensive and overall solution to the long protracted Middle East conflict. This unprecedented development, which we thought impossible in the past, has been able to take place because of the new state of international relations which now exists as a consequence of the end of the cold war.

When the Assembly considered agenda item 35, "Question of Palestine", two days ago, the PLO-Israel Declaration of Principles was widely welcomed by Member States. However, the momentum created by this initial step should not be lost. We therefore reiterate our call to the parties directly concerned to ensure the full and timely implementation of the various understandings arrived at in the recent Declaration of Principles.

The Declaration of Principles, however, is only the beginning in the long search for permanent peace in the Middle East. While it addresses the initial concerns of the Palestinian people and Israel, the other pending issues affecting the other States in the Middle East, such as Syria, Jordan and Lebanon, also need to be addressed expeditiously in the continuing efforts for a comprehensive settlement. These and other issues are relevant in the General Assembly's current consideration of agenda item 34, "The situation in the Middle East".

Malaysia has consistently voiced its support for a comprehensive solution to the Middle East conflict, one that would bring lasting peace and stability to all the countries in the region, in line with Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). We are therefore optimistic that the political goodwill that propelled the signing of the recent PLO-Israel Declaration of Principles could now be extended to also finding solutions to the outstanding problems in the Middle East conflict. In this regard, Israel should now actively pursue negotiations which would bring about Israeli withdrawal from the occupied Syrian Golan Heights as well as from other occupied Arab territories, consonant with the various resolutions of the United Nations.

We also hope that no Member State will take any action that would further complicate the search for a comprehensive solution to this problem. Member States should also strictly comply with General Assembly resolution 47/63 B of 11 December 1992, which deals with the transfer by some States of their diplomatic missions to Jerusalem, in violation of Security Council resolution 478 (1980) of 20 August 1980. In fact, Malaysia firmly believes that the question of Jerusalem itself should receive special consideration in the peace process.

There is also a need to consider other relevant issues, one of which is the prevalent belief that Israel possesses a nuclear capacity. This has undoubtedly engendered fears among the countries in the region and has to a large extent contributed to the arms build-up there. If Israel does in fact possess a nuclear capacity, then its nuclear activities and facilities should also be subject to International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards and inspections. On this nuclear issue, it is important that the United Nations be seen to be acting even-handedly in regard to all those countries which are alleged to have similar nuclear capacity. Malaysia reiterates its support for the establishment in the Middle East of a nuclear-weapons-free zone as well as a zone devoid of other weapons of mass destruction, including chemical and biological weapons.

We have this year seen positive developments in the search for permanent peace in the Middle East. This process must move ahead unhindered. Hopefully, when we take up this item again at next year's session we will be in a position to take note of further positive developments in the Middle East.

Mr. PITSUWAN (Thailand): It is with a renewed sense of pride and confidence in the merit of the international negotiating system that I address the Assembly this afternoon. Under the able leadership of our President, and inspired by the prospect of peace, harmony, common prosperity and unity, our civilized nations are witnessing the writing of a new chapter in history.

As we speak, a new light of hope is spreading across the Middle East with the mutual recognition of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization. Indeed, the world witnessed a new beginning when Chairman Arafat and Prime Minister Rabin shook hands on the South Lawn of the White House in Washington on 13 September 1993, signifying the first step in a five-year plan for a permanent

solution to the Middle East conflict. The Royal Thai Government congratulates both men on their wisdom, forethought and courage in bringing about what it is hoped will be the end of one of this century's most harrowing territorial disputes.

However, let us bear in mind that no stroke of a presidential pen can ensure peace and prosperity. On the contrary, recent euphoria has been marred by violence and bloodshed, exposing the fragility of the peace settlement. In the light of these events, the international community must continue to work with both parties to guarantee and ensure mutual harmony. My delegation urges all parties to render their full support to enable this peace settlement to become a durable and practical one. The Royal Thai Government will continue to monitor this positive development and render its assistance to the peace process through all peaceful means.

The signing of the Declaration of Principles on Palestinian self-government in the occupied territories is a welcome breakthrough in years of strife and stalemate. My Government hopes that the international community will soon recognize the national and political sovereignty of the Palestinian people. We call upon the United Nations to guide the peace process and ensure the Palestinian people's inalienable rights, independence and self-determination. Reaffirming our belief in the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by force, the Thai Government would likewise encourage Israel to expedite the initial withdrawal of its forces from the Gaza strip and the Jericho area, as well as from other occupied Arab territories. With such confidence-building in the peacemaking process in the Middle East, we feel the region will have truly achieved a reconciliation of peace and justice based on the relevant Security Council resolutions.

Starting in Madrid and ending in Washington, the process of this long-awaited peace accord is in fact the culmination of years of debate, deliberation and patience. My delegation recognizes the indispensable contributions of the Jordanian-Israeli peace negotiations to this end. The Royal Thai Government applauds the adoption of a common agenda between the State of Israel and the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan as another hopeful contribution to a lasting solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Thailand, like Jordan, fully understands the problems created by regional conflicts and refugee outflow, which affect neighbouring countries. My delegation salutes the Jordanian delegation for its country's acceptance and care of the large number of refugees, who, since 1948, have been fleeing turmoil and hardship in search of peace, tranquillity and a safe haven. In turn, we take heart in the adoption of this common agenda and hope that it will lead to further acceptance of mutually satisfactory solutions.

In a few days we will observe the forty-fourth anniversary of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinians in the Near East. UNRWA, as it has come to be known, has functioned with resolve and efficiency. Operating under budgetary constraints amid the *intifadah* has indeed challenged the successful carrying out of UNRWA's mandate. However, UNRWA has done well. Within an extremely hostile environment, the Agency has been able to provide numerous services to millions of refugees in the region. Both primary and vocational training, overall health care and a drastic reduction in the mortality rate have contributed to the preservation of Palestinian culture and tradition.

While it is important that UNRWA continue to perform the difficult task of providing the necessary assistance to Palestinian refugees, we also believe that it should now focus on the effective implementation of an integrated programme of assistance, which is an integral part of the reconstruction and rehabilitation process. In this connection, the Royal Thai Government will continue to support the work of UNRWA until there is a comprehensive peace in the Middle East.

An armed truce and a political solution alone are not enough to generate the economic and social well-being that is the essential precondition for a just and lasting peace. The work of UNRWA in the past has contributed significantly to the Palestinians' political struggle. In the opinion of my delegation, UNRWA's excellent record must be sustained; let us not forget that the refugees are not the responsibility of the United Nations alone but, rather, the responsibility of all civilized nations as members of the international community.

We have seen bitter foes shake hands and commit themselves to the prospect of peace. The Royal Thai Government would like to congratulate once again all parties to the historic agreements. Thailand stands ready to assist in the peace process and in the attainment of a just, lasting, comprehensive peace agreement. We are truly encouraged by the prospect of peace returning to the Holy Land.

Mr. ABULHASAN (Kuwait) *(interpretation from Arabic):* On behalf of the delegation of the State of Kuwait, I am pleased to express our thanks and appreciation to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, for his efforts and for his reports on the situation in the Middle East.

The General Assembly considers today the item on its agenda at its current session entitled "The situation in the Middle East" against a background of dramatic changes on the international political scene and particularly in the Middle East. At the international level, and with the end of the cold war, cooperation has replaced confrontation between States; this has provided a new and unique opportunity for breaking the deadlock in the Middle East, as evidenced in the signing of the Palestinian-Israeli accord regarding Israel's withdrawal from Gaza and Jericho, which is scheduled to begin, God willing, within the next two weeks.

We consider this accord to be merely a beginning for an integrated process to achieve a comprehensive peace based on Israel's withdrawal from all occupied Arab territories in Syria, Lebanon and Palestine. Against this backdrop, the Assembly's consideration of the items on the question of Palestine and the situation in the Middle East assumes special significance. We believe that, given that background, the Assembly's discussion of these issues does contribute to the creation of a favourable environment for making additional efforts to achieve a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement to the question of Palestine, which lies at the root of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

There is no question that the achievement of a comprehensive, lasting and just settlement in the Middle East is a primary goal in terms of the preservation and maintenance of international peace and security. The peace process that began in Madrid and the bilateral and multilateral negotiations should be viewed as the right way to achieve permanent peace in the Middle East region, and they should therefore not be perceived as a win-or-lose game; rather, they should be seen as representing a window of opportunity enabling all peoples of the region to live in peace and security.

The important fact today is that the international community has now reached a consensus on the basic principles for a comprehensive settlement in the Middle East based on the fundamental principle of land for peace. These principles can be summed up as follows: firstly, Israel must withdraw from occupied Palestinian and other Arab territories, including the Holy City of Jerusalem and the Syrian Arab Golan, on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973); secondly, Israel must withdraw from southern Lebanon - in accordance with Security Council resolution 425 (1978) - and must respect the sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity and national unity of Lebanon within its internationally recognized borders while refraining from interference in Lebanese domestic affairs; thirdly, the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including their right to self-determination must be recognized and implemented; and, fourthly, the right of all States in the region to live in peace and security within secure and internationally recognized borders must be respected.

Kuwait took part in the multilateral negotiations called for by the Madrid Peace Conference on the Middle East. Our conviction was then, and continues to be now, that a just and comprehensive settlement in the Middle East must be reached, and that the core of that problem is the question of Palestine. Any settlement should be based on international legality and the norms of international law.

One of the most important goals behind the establishment of the United Nations was to promote the development of friendly relations between States on the basis of respect for the principle of equality in rights and the right to self-determination of all peoples of the world, as is set out in the Charter of the United Nations. The right to self-determination is a basic national right for securing the other national rights of any people that has a sense of forming its own, independent national entity, namely, the rights to independence and sovereignty.

The right to self-determination must be implemented in the absence of external pressure and without repressive measures. Full respect for the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people is an indispensable component of any just and lasting peace in the Middle East.

We are deeply concerned about the continued deterioration in conditions in the occupied Palestinian territories as a result of the practices pursued by the occupation authorities. This deterioration has been occurring despite the promises and obligations those authorities made and assumed, especially those they made for this period in which there are high hopes of achieving a just peace.

Information contained in the report of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People indicates that there has been a continuation and exacerbation of the serious violations of human rights of the Palestinian people in the occupied territories resulting from the attempts to suppress the civilian Palestinian uprising which started some five and a half years ago.

We must put on record here that occupation is in itself a very serious violation of basic human rights; we in Kuwait know full well - and at first hand - what invasion and occupation mean, thanks to the brutal Iraqi aggression against my country.

We are convinced that the peace process should be accompanied by confidence-building measures to reduce the difficulties faced by the Palestinian people in its own

territory and by the improvement of the general political climate in the Middle East. Thus, we do not understand how Israel could take measures that are contrary to confidence-building. The Israeli Supreme Court handed down a ruling considering the Al-Aqsa mosque to be a part of the land area of the State of Israel and subjecting all restoration and maintenance work undertaken there to Israel's planning and building regulations and to its antiquities laws. That Israeli decision runs counter to the Security Council resolutions that deem null and void any attempt to alter the physical features of Jerusalem or any measures to annex the Holy City. In point of fact, we expect Israel to take measures in support of the Palestinian-Israeli agreement and to build bridges of confidence between the Palestinian and the Israeli peoples. What we are seeing today is contrary to our expectations. Those Israeli measures foreshadow adverse consequences and every effort should be made to forestall those consequences.

All parties, including the negotiating parties and those that can contribute to progress, should adopt a constructive and responsible approach and reject any steps that might complicate the peace process. We hope that the United Nations will promote the ongoing Arab-Israeli negotiations. All parties have welcomed the negotiations, and my country supports the suggestion made by the Secretary-General in his report that the efforts of the United Nations should be redoubled so that the Organization may participate in the negotiating process that all parties now welcome.

We should recall here that United Nations peace-keeping operations started in the Middle East and that in humanitarian, economic and social terms, the United Nations has an unbroken record of providing assistance in the region. Kuwait, along with other Arab countries, welcomes a supporting role for the United Nations in order to achieve a just and permanent settlement and to ensure the foundations of peace, most important of which is economic and social development, an essential component of international peace and security.

My country urges all parties concerned to adopt a sound approach in order to show good faith and build bridges of confidence. Once a permanent, just and comprehensive settlement is achieved, my country will support the efforts for peace and economic recovery in the region. The time has come to look beyond short-term considerations. We must have a clear vision of the future. The time is now ripe for restoring the trust of the peoples of the region by working to open up new prospects of tranquillity, prosperity, stability and progress, which would enable the Middle East region to continue to play its valuable role in the advancement of mankind.

Finally, we offer a prayer in praise of our Lord.

Mr. MOMIN (Brunei Darussalam): We welcomed the signing of the Declaration of Principles by the Palestine Liberation Organization and the Israeli authorities and are pleased to note that negotiations between them are proceeding on the basis of that Declaration. However, we recognize that there is still a lot of work ahead if the Declaration is to be successful in practical terms. There appear to be a number of problems which could cause considerable difficulty, such as the status of Jerusalem, the disposition of Israeli settlements, and the question of refugees.

Brunei Darussalam hopes that the ongoing peace negotiations will lead to the eventual restoration of the Palestinians' inalienable rights, which include the right to an independent state for the Palestinians on the basis of the relevant United Nations resolutions. We further hope that this will in turn lead to a comprehensive and durable peace throughout the Middle East. We therefore believe that it is our collective responsibility to ensure that the hopes and aspirations expressed in the handshake between the Palestinian and Israeli leaders in Washington, D.C., on 13 September this year are fulfilled.

The signing of the Declaration has given the Palestinians new opportunities. However, they now face the task of ensuring economic and social development. The international community can help them in this regard, and Brunei Darussalam is willing to play its part.

We feel that if a lasting solution is to be found in the Middle East, support for the current peace process is needed not only from outside the region but also from everyone in the region. We urge all interested parties to take advantage of the new opportunities the peace process has opened up and to work not only towards the attainment of immediate goals but also towards long-lasting peace and stability in the region.

We wish to reiterate our view that the signing of the Declaration is but a step, albeit an important one, towards long-lasting peace and stability in the region. We also hope that the international community will support the process to ensure that the Middle East region, which has been the scene of so much hostility and violent conflict, will have peace and stability at last.

Mr. ABDULLAH (Indonesia): The past year will be recorded in the annals of history as the year in which significant initiatives were taken towards a negotiated solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict. Of particular importance in this regard is the repeal of the Israeli law against contacts with the Palestine Liberation Organization

(PLO), the decision to negotiate directly with the representatives of the PLO, and, above all, the historic signing of the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements. These are great strides made by the PLO towards the attainment of its long-cherished national and political rights. My delegation has equally welcomed the Agreement on the Common Agenda in the context of the Jordan-Israeli peace negotiations; that Agreement is the single most important step taken by Jordan and Israel towards a peace treaty within the framework of an Arab-Israeli settlement. Thus, it can rightly be said that there has recently been more progress towards peace in that region than at any time during the last decade and a half.

Our sense of optimism has been further bolstered by the encouraging comments made by many Member States in our debate during this session, particularly by the representatives of Israel, Jordan and the PLO. Against the backdrop of the trend towards peaceful resolution of conflicts in various regions, it is obvious that our attention should remain focused on the overriding issues in the Middle East and especially on the need for progress towards a peaceful settlement of the conflict that has for so long kept the region embroiled in a constant state of turmoil and turbulence. Hence, there is today an undeniable sense of frustration with the status quo which we share with the parties to the conflict and an insistence that negotiations be intensified within a mutually acceptable framework.

However, in sharp contrast to these positive trends, we are also aware of a deepening sense of disillusionment. It was the fervent hope of many Member States that the process of implementing the provisions of the Declaration of Principles on Palestinian self-rule would henceforth go forward with all deliberate speed and thereby provide much-needed momentum in addressing the various interrelated aspects of the Arab-Israeli conflict. To our profound dismay and disappointment, however, these negotiations have faced numerous obstacles and difficulties which are inconsistent with both the letter and the spirit of the Declaration. Further aggravating the situation is the persistence of Israeli policies and practices in the occupied territories and the inflexibility Israel has shown in the negotiations, which cannot but have broader ramifications. We therefore deem it imperative that the gains achieved so far not be lost, and we call upon Israeli to redirect those negotiations with a view to achieving permanent peace in the region.

Of immediate importance in this context is the process of transferring power to the Palestinian authorities throughout the West Bank. This should be followed by sustained endeavours on other tracks of the Arab-Israeli negotiations based on the framework established by Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978) and full withdrawal of Israeli forces from all occupied territories, including Jerusalem, the Syrian Golan Heights and southern Lebanon. Furthermore, we agree with the widely held view that the United Nations should play an active role, especially since the Organization has in the past made, and can in the future make, important contributions to peace in the Middle East. The task before us all is to foster productive negotiations; which continue to hold out the best hope for the real progress that is so essential to the people of the Middle East. We are fully aware that all basic issues must be resolved and that there will be no genuine peace unless the concerns of the parties for their territorial integrity, political independence and right to exist in peace are addressed, and the legitimate interests of all concerned, including the Palestinians, are taken into account.

Finally, my delegation has noted with profound gratification the positive developments that have taken place in Lebanon, especially the sustained progress made in national reconciliation and in the endeavours to ensure the full authority of the Government over all of its territory. Nevertheless, southern Lebanon continues to be under the occupation of surrogates set up by Israel. Indonesia has in the past condemned this illegal occupation and supported the resistance of the Lebanese people, who wish to liberate their country. We look forward to the day when the sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of Lebanon are restored and the authority of its Government prevails over all of its territory.

In the Middle East today there is a yearning for peace that perhaps surpasses any known in the past. Hence it is essential to ensure that the region will not relapse into another generation of strife and struggle, confrontation and instability, with the unthinkable consequences that would have. Instead, we should seize the historic opportunity now before us and marshall our collective commitment to making the ongoing peace process an irreversible turning point in history. The hopes and interests of the peoples of the Middle East and, indeed, of all the world call for the achievement of the common objectives of true peace, common security and generalized prosperity.

Mr. KOVANDA (Czech Republic): Due to its strategic, economic and cultural importance, the Middle East has been the Achilles heel of the whole world's security situation. The situation in the Middle East has erupted several times into wars. Today, after the hopeful results of the Israeli-Palestinian and the Israeli-Jordanian talks, we can say that the inflammation of this Achilles heel does not hurt quite as much. Yes, treatment has started. It will be complicated, expensive, long-term and

perhaps even painful, but in our opinion absolutely necessary. There is no alternative. The process has begun and we know that it is the only way to a resolution of the Israeli-Arab conflict and a genuine settlement of the Palestinian question. The Middle East conflict amounts to an entire knot of problems which the parties concerned must resolve one by one until they are all sorted out.

In our view, tension in the occupied territories and throughout the region can be lessened only by a comprehensive and just settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict and of the Palestinian question in accordance with the relevant Security Council resolutions, the United Nations Charter and the principles of international law. We appreciate the fact that the Israeli-Palestinian Declaration of Principles describes itself as part of an entire Middle East peace process and that the ensuing Israeli-Palestinian talks are designed to contribute to a settlement based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). We believe that this hopeful process will also contribute to the full re-establishment of the sovereignty of Lebanon over the south of its territory, on the basis of Security Council resolution 425 (1978). And, finally, the right of self-determination for all nations in the region, including the Palestinians, must be confirmed in all its aspects and within the framework of international law. I hope we shall see a lasting, comprehensive and just peace in the Middle East, a peace conducive to overall development, a peace which will contribute to stability and security throughout the world.

The Czech Republic welcomes without reservations the peace process in the Middle East. Especially now, as we are about to become a non-permanent member of the Security Council for 1994 and 1995, we wish to stress that we shall support this process in every way we can and so help bring it to a successful conclusion. We fully understand that the current negotiations are only the beginning of a very long and complicated process. We are at the beginning of a road with plenty of potholes ahead. But we believe that with the support of the world community - and I mean not only moral support, but also financial, technical and economic aid - this goal will prove to be attainable. My country, like many other countries of the world, is ready to take part in the programme of economic assistance to the Middle East and above all to the occupied territories.

The Middle East has the chance today to become an example for the settlement of other ethnic, religious and territorial conflicts in the world by political means. Now, after long decades of suffering and struggle and on the basis of their own experience, nations of the Middle East can demonstrate to the rest of the world that terrorism and all other types of violence do not lead to, but on the contrary work against, the settlement of such conflicts. The Czech Republic opposes efforts at violent resolution of conflicts, condemns terrorism and believes that the example of the Middle East will convince all those who still may doubt it that even conflicts as intractable as that in the Middle East can be resolved peacefully.

Other elements of the complicated situation in the Middle East have to be considered as well. Take, for example, the direct and extremely important influence of the situation in the Gulf on the rest of the Middle East. The aftermath of the Iraqi aggression against a sovereign and independent Kuwait shows how fragile the line between peace and war is and how important the role of the international community is for that region. We are heartened by the successes in the reconstruction of Kuwait, but at the same time we are aware of unfulfilled Iraqi obligations. I should like from this rostrum to confirm that the Czech Republic supports Kuwait in its rightful demands that Iraq comply with all resolutions concerning reparations of damages. We support Security Council resolution 833 (1993) relating to the boundary demarcation between Kuwait and Iraq, and we are especially aggrieved by the humanitarian problem of Kuwaiti citizens detained and missing in Iraq.

Today we also witness with satisfaction the peaceful reconstruction of Lebanon, which recently celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of its statehood. Not long ago this country was on the brink of the abyss of destruction. Peace has been restored to this beautiful land and with it an outlook for a better future and prosperity. Here too, my country wishes to lend its hand and take part in specific reconstruction projects.

We share the hopes of most of the world with regard to the current developments in the Middle East. Those expectations are based on our belief that even such long-term and difficult conflicts as those that exist in that region can be settled in principle and that they can be settled by peaceful means.

Mr. AL-ZAABI (United Arab Emirates) *(interpretation from Arabic)*: It is my pleasure to speak here today on behalf of the delegation of the United Arab Emirates on agenda item 34, "The situation in the Middle East." In that connection, I should like to extend to the Secretary-General of the United Nations our deepest thanks and appreciation for his sincere efforts in this field.

The entire world has welcomed the success achieved in the Palestinian-Israeli negotiations as reflected in the Declaration of Principles signed by the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and Israel as a first step towards a just and durable peace in the Middle East. In this context we

would stress the need to achieve progress on the other related tracks towards an overall settlement of the Middle East problem, particularly at the levels of the Syrian-Israeli and Lebanese-Israeli negotiations.

Many efforts have been deployed and attempts have been made by certain States, at both the regional and international levels, to move those negotiations forward and to ensure their success. We hope that all such efforts and attempts will be crowned with success and lead to positive concrete steps towards the withdrawal by Israel from all occupied Arab territories, particularly the Syrian Golan Heights, Holy Al-Quds and southern Lebanon, as well as towards the implementation of the principles enshrined in the United Nations Charter and international law relating to the treatment of civilian persons living under occupation, particularly the fourth Geneva Convention of 1949.

The international community has agreed that the question of Palestine is at the core of the problem in the Middle East. That is a recognized fact. The two issues are, therefore, interlinked and cannot be separated from one another. Given this fact, and in order to move the peace process forward towards a just, durable and comprehensive settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict, we believe that the international community is in duty bound to deploy further efforts and to try harder to move the process of peace forward and to eliminate all obstacles and difficulties from its path.

There can be no doubt that one of the essential prerequisites for the success of the peace process in the Middle East is the creation of an atmosphere of confidence and political will. The steps now being taken towards peace are merely the first on a long and arduous road, one strewn with economic, political and security pitfalls.

The Foreign Minister of my country stated from this rostrum that the United Arab Emirates welcomed the convening of the Madrid Peace Conference and the holding of bilateral and multilateral negotiations, in the latter of which it participated. We have also welcomed the Declaration of Principles concluded between the Palestine Liberation Organization and Israel as a positive beginning and a first step towards a just, comprehensive and durable settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict and the question of Palestine, on the basis of international legality as reflected in the relevant United Nations resolutions, most notably Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), as well as the land-for-peace principle. Such a settlement should enable the Palestinian people to exercise their national inalienable rights, including the right to self-determination, and bring about a total Israeli withdrawal from all occupied Arab territories, including the Golan Heights and the Holy City of Al-Quds.

He also declared the United Arab Emirates support for the sustained efforts undertaken by the fraternal Lebanese Government to extend its national sovereignty over all Lebanese national soil and called for the full implementation of Security Council resolution 425 (1978) as a contribution to the consolidation of peace and stability and to the creation of the conditions necessary for social and economic development.

We hope that the bilateral and multilateral negotiations will lead to the creation of a better situation on the ground and a new political environment throughout the Middle East, one of peaceful dialogue in the solution of disputes and disagreements and in which international and regional peace, security and stability will be promoted.

In conclusion I should like to stress the need for the United Nations and its specialized agencies involved with the question of Palestine and the problem in the Middle East to play an important role in promoting the current peace process in its developmental economic, social and political dimensions until peace, security and stability are achieved in that region, a peace based on justice, equality, respect for human rights, international law and international resolutions on the subject, so that the States and peoples of that region may live in durable peace and security and thereby achieve progress and prosperity.

Mr. Bull (Liberia), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Mr. BATU (Turkey): Over the past 45 years, the question of Palestine and the Arab-Israeli conflict has been at the core of troubles in the Middle East and the direct cause of endless human suffering and a number of major wars. Turkey, being contiguous to this region, has a direct and natural interest in the Middle East and in the fate of its people. We therefore welcome this opportunity once again to set before the General Assembly our views on the Middle East question, which awaits a just and lasting settlement.

Since the debate in the General Assembly on this item last year, we have witnessed momentous developments. After years of hostilities, Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) exchanged letters of mutual recognition. The signing in Washington of the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements by Israel and the PLO and the ensuing Israeli-Jordanian Agreement on the Common Agenda for negotiations are historic steps which, we hope, will accelerate the peace process and culminate in a just and lasting settlement to

the Middle East conflict, on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973).

We would like to pay a tribute to President Arafat and Prime Minister Rabin for the statesmanship they displayed in overcoming all the obstacles on their path.

Turkey, having always considered the question of Palestine to be a core issue of the Middle East problem, has welcomed the Israeli-Palestinian agreement. We consider that agreement to be a first but essential step in an irreversible process, which must continue in all its aspects and lead towards the ultimate objective of achieving complete and lasting peace in the region. The momentum thus gained should be fully utilized with a view to ensuring the peaceful and timely implementation of the agreement and complementing it by result-oriented negotiations on Syrian, Lebanese and Jordanian tracks. At this stage, both Israelis and Palestinians should realize that they have vital strategic interests in keeping the agreement viable and making the process irreversible. Both sides must try to understand the psychological changes that have to accompany the implementation of the agreement.

Continuing acts of violence remain a matter of great concern and we appeal to all parties to break the vicious circle of violence and reprisal.

Full compliance by the Israeli authorities with all of the universally accepted standards of human rights, and improved economic and social conditions for Palestinians to enable them to develop a viable economic infrastructure, are of the utmost importance in overcoming existing difficulties and moving the peace process forward. This would also ease the political tension in the whole region and prevent some extremist elements from gaining influence there. The holding of the International Donors Conference in Washington, which Turkey had the privilege of participating in and contributing to, and the establishment of a United Nations high-level task force are very important developments to that end.

It is precisely in this context that Turkey is prepared to offer its renewed support. We are prepared to contribute to the development of the Palestinian infrastructure in various fields. We can provide services and facilities in the areas of banking, finance, agriculture and tourism. We are prepared to provide technical assistance and training in various fields. We are ready to share the experience we had in resettling hundreds of thousands of refugees in our country in past years.

The recent agreement between Israel and the PLO has raised hopes and expectations about the beginning of a new era in the Middle East. Palestinian and Israeli leadership assumed a historic responsibility not only towards their respective peoples but *vis-à-vis* the peoples of all countries in the region. We have full confidence in their wisdom, vision and courage. At this stage we believe that our aim in the General Assembly should be to create an atmosphere conducive to the successful implementation of the Israeli-Palestinian agreement and to encourage all participants in the peace process to work towards a more result-oriented involvement in the new environment.

Three years after the outbreak of the Gulf crisis the people of Iraq are still suffering hardship. This regrettable situation arose mainly from the reluctance of the Government in Baghdad to comply fully with the requirements of Security Council resolutions. Compliance by Iraq would clearly demonstrate the interest of that country in resuming its place in the international community. By recently accepting the obligations set forth in resolution 715 (1991), Iraq has taken an important step forward. We welcome this step and hope that this positive approach will continue and lead to further positive developments.

In the meantime the international community must help to relieve the suffering of the people of Iraq. We, for our part, have been to the fore in providing humanitarian assistance since 1991. The Turkish humanitarian assistance programme directed towards alleviating the situation of the entire population of northern Iraq, has been running smoothly. It is being implemented without prejudice to the sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of Iraq.

Besides the people of Iraq, some others, particularly Iraq's neighbours, have been adversely affected by the economic sanctions imposed on Iraq. It would only be fair for the international community to find means to redress the mounting economic losses suffered by these countries.

I should like to conclude my statement by referring to the situation in Lebanon. Turkey has been following with keen interest the positive developments in that country. We attach great importance to the maintenance of Lebanon's territorial integrity, independence and sovereignty. We support the efforts of the Lebanese Government to expand the Government's control and authority throughout all Lebanese territory. We stress the importance of full and strict implementation of the Taif Agreement by all parties concerned, and equally we stress once again the need for the implementation of Security Council resolution 425 (1978), in which the Council calls upon Israel to respect the territorial integrity of Lebanon and to withdraw its forces to the internationally recognized boundaries.

Mr. MARKER (Pakistan): Today, the Middle East is at a crossroads. For the first time in decades, the region appears to have peace within its reach. Needless to say, a just and durable peace would permit the nations in the region to focus their efforts on the much needed improvement in the lives of their peoples.

Pakistan welcomes the ongoing negotiations for a comprehensive peace in the Middle East and appreciates the role played in this connection by the Governments of Norway, the United States of America and the Russian Federation. We share the hope that these talks will result in the early exercise by the Palestinian people of their right to self-determination and will lead to the withdrawal of Israel from occupied Palestinian and Arab territories, including the Holy City of Jerusalem. We hope the final settlement will adequately address all aspects of the Middle East issue, including the return of refugees.

Pakistan's support for the just aspirations of the people of Palestine is well known. We endorse Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978) as a basis for resolving the Middle East and Palestinian problems.

The agreement between the Palestine Liberation Organization and Israel - the Declaration of Principles on Palestinian interim government arrangements in the occupied territories - is a welcome first step towards a comprehensive solution of the Middle East conflict, based on the formula of land for peace. We share the expectation of the international community that the agreement will be implemented, in letter and in spirit, and sooner rather than later. This initial accord could constitute a sound foundation for a durable peace in the Middle East.

The agreement regarding the agenda for the Jordanian-Israeli negotiations is a positive initial step. It now needs to be taken forward to its logical conclusion.

For peace to take firm root in the Middle East, it is equally important that progress be achieved at the same time on the Lebanese and Syrian tracks. Unless these fundamental aspects of the equation are also adequately addressed, peace will continue to elude the region.

It is essential to maintain the present momentum. The unfortunate events of recent days in the Gaza Strip should serve to strengthen the resolve of the parties concerned and spur them towards early agreements. Undue delays could only set the clock back. This moment must not be lost. The implications of such an eventuality are far-reaching. We urge the parties concerned - in particular, Israel - to demonstrate the requisite flexibility and accommodation. The need of the hour is a sincere commitment to the vision of a better tomorrow. Such a commitment must be reflected in tangible progress on the ground.

The United Nations must continue its efforts aimed at resolving the Middle East problem. The Organization and its specialized agencies have a special responsibility to expand assistance to the Palestinian people to help them to build the socio-economic infrastructure and national institutions that are essential to realization of the vision of peace, amity and prosperity in the Holy Land. In this connection, we welcome the recent initiatives taken by the Secretary-General.

The nexus between the political process and the socio-economic dimension of the problem cannot be denied. It will be crucial to lasting stability in the region. The Washington Conference of 1 October 1993 was a reflection of the determination of the international community to assist the parties in achieving this objective.

For its part, Pakistan is prepared to contribute to the establishment of a durable peace in the region on the basis of the relevant Security Council resolutions and the agreements between the parties concerned. We also stand ready to participate in national reconstruction efforts. Pakistan's links with the people of the Middle East are deep-rooted. We look forward to further strengthening the natural bonds of our common history.

Mr. ABU ODEH (Jordan) *(interpretation from Arabic)*: As this is my first address to the General Assembly during its forty-eighth session, I should like to express to Mr. Insanally of Guyana my delegation's warm congratulations on his election to the Presidency of the Assembly for the session. My country is confident, in view of Mr. Insanally's prudence, skills and distinguished administrative capabilities, that the deliberations of the Assembly will continue to proceed smoothly towards a successful conclusion, along the lines of the Charter.

I should like also to take this opportunity to express my delegation's sincere thanks and deep appreciation to Mr. Insanally's predecessor, Mr. Stoyan Ganev, for his able stewardship and his commendable contribution.

About two and a half months have passed since the most significant step was taken after the Madrid Middle East peace Conference that was convened three years ago. On 13 September 1993, the whole world witnessed the historic handshake between Mr. Yasser Arafat, Chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organization, and Mr. Yitzhak Rabin, the Israeli Prime Minister, following the signing of the Declaration of Principles and mutual recognition between Israel and the PLO. In the historical

perspective of the Middle East conflict, that handshake represented the beginning of reconciliation between Palestinian nationalism and Israel.

That reconciliation is beginning to yield concrete, positive results. Suffice it to cite, in this context, the fact that the Palestinians and the Israelis have already set up joint action committees and are actively pursuing the implementation of the Declaration of Principles within the time-frames set forth therein.

When we remind ourselves that the question of Palestine is the core and essence of the Middle East conflict, it becomes unmistakably clear that that reconciliation was indeed the first important step towards a just, comprehensive and peaceful resolution of the entire Middle East conflict, on the basis of international legality. In point of fact, that single act in itself was bound to ripple out to the other bilateral tracks and to the multiple track. The fact that a joint agenda was signed by Jordan and Israel the very next day - 14 September 1993 - is clear proof of that fact. Similarly, the Donors' Conference that was held on 1 October 1993 is proof of the enormous significance of that landmark event. The Conference brought together 46 countries including the Palestine Liberation Organization and Jordan. The Conference's results were practical enough, meaningful and encouraging: the donors pledged specific financial contributions over the next five years to assist the Palestinian Interim Self-Government Authority that will be set up for Gaza and Jericho and cleared the way for assistance to the other parties involved in the peace process.

If the Palestinian-Israeli Declaration of Principles was the first tangible step towards peace, progress on the Jordanian-Israeli, Syrian-Israeli and Lebanese-Israeli tracks will be the factor that will ensure movement towards the comprehensive peace that the countries of the region and the international community have longed for as a prelude to lasting regional peace and security. The multilateral track is no less important than the bilateral tracks, for it involves 13 Arab States and Israel, together with the two co-sponsors - the United States and the Russian Federation - in addition to other participants from outside the region, including Japan, China, Canada, Australia, the World Bank and the United Nations. So far, this track has yielded results that have gone beyond the exchange of abstract ideas to cover tangible matters, such as feasibility studies, training programmes and the establishment of a Joint Jordanian-Israeli-American Committee within that framework. Moreover, some Arab capitals have already hosted the participants in those activities.

The implications of all this are quite obvious in terms of confidence-building between the parties to the conflict and underscoring the earnest nature of the peace process, while deepening the involvement of the international community in its various aspects.

Undoubtedly, all those achievements and developments are cause for optimism, joy and hope, as they demonstrate that the forces of peace, good and coexistence are on their way to triumph over the forces of war, evil and expansionism. They also prove that the two peace camps on the Arab and the Israeli sides are gaining strength and coherence while the rejectionists on the other side of the divide are getting more furious and exasperated. The yearning for a future of hope and good faith is steadily gaining ground as it gradually takes the place of the tendency to look back in anger and in fear.

Nevertheless, the very nature of the Arab-Israeli conflict - in terms of its deep roots, its implications and its accumulated negative effects, which have spanned this century to the extent of almost becoming part of the cultural heritage of both the Arabs and the Israelis - should alert us all to the fact that the road will not be smooth or easy. Setbacks should indeed be expected. The tensions and confrontations now rearing their heads in the occupied Palestinian territories are but sharp reminders of those pitfalls. In order to put things in perspective with a view to staving off despair and frustration, we have to remember that the wars fought by both sides over the years have themselves engendered major problems, each of which is sufficient to fuel yet another conflict unless adequately addressed in a bid for just resolution. The questions of Palestinian refugees, Israeli settlements, Jerusalem, the Golan and security are but examples. All these issues - and the list is not exhaustive - have been the subjects of resolutions adopted by the United Nations on the basis of its Charter and the norms of international law.

What encourages us in this context, however, is our conviction that we are on the right track, that the long-standing struggle of the Palestinian people has started to bear fruit, and that the parties involved in the peace process remain committed to their peace obligations and that they have agreed to include all these issues in the agenda for negotiations. It is our fervent hope that they will be able to resolve them in accordance with the tenets of international law. In our view, however, hope by itself is insufficient. We believe that the United Nations should lend its backing and support to the peace process.

My delegation recognizes the commendable efforts and contributions of the United Nations in the ongoing peace process. However, we maintain that the United Nations has a still more vital and a larger role to play along the following lines:

First, the United Nations should continue to be the baseline of international legality and the embodiment of the conscience of mankind in its reaffirmation of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and all the other relevant resolutions relating to all issues emanating from the Arab-Israeli conflict which were adopted in the context of the situation in the Middle East and the question of Palestine.

And secondly, the United Nations should explore ways and means to reinforce the two peace camps on the Arab and the Israeli sides by the following means: United Nations Member States, specialized agencies, programmes and funds should provide support and assistance to the negotiating parties in the social, economic, cultural, developmental and humanitarian fields.

It is to be recalled, in this respect, that in addition to the PLO's pressing need for financial and technical assistance, required to establish from scratch an interim national authority, most other parties, including my country, are heavily saddled with foreign debt, and that such burdens pose serious financial obstacles which hamper our strenuous efforts to create an economic and psychological environment conducive to accelerating our pace in the peace process.

The United Nations should help the negotiating parties to deepen their political commitment to the peace process by supporting the progress made last September in the form of the Declaration of Principles and the mutual recognition between Israel and the PLO, as well as the Jordanian-Israeli joint agenda. In the past, the United Nations welcomed the Madrid conference. Today, we call upon the United Nations to support the most recent progress. That support should not be limited to words but should be translated into deeds.

The United Nations can also enhance the psychological commitment of the parties concerned to the peace process. That psychological commitment to ensuring the success of the peace process is no less important than the political commitment. In point of fact, the former constitutes the underpinning of the latter, for without the psychological component, the political undertaking could well turn into a tactical manoeuvre to buy time or to deceive the international community. Since the psychological commitment is a state of mind, its entrenchment or expansion will certainly need more than just political lip-service on the part of one side or the other. It is the common responsibility of all the negotiating parties, which makes it incumbent upon all of them, *inter alia*, to change the message contained in their political and public discourse. The United Nations, by preserving its role as the conscience of universal justice and international law, can indeed deepen the conviction in the peace option and the peace process. This, in turn, will strengthen the psychological commitment of the negotiators.

Accordingly, we must be careful to avoid the illusion that the United Nations role ended when Israel and the PLO signed the Declaration of Principles. It certainly did not. The United Nations must continue to play an active role until the protagonists reach the stage of implementing Security Council resolution 242 (1967) and until the Palestinian people are able to exercise their inalienable national rights, including the right to self-determination on their national territory and the establishment of an independent State of their own with Arab Al-Quds as its capital.

My country has been committed to work for peace since the door was opened for peace by Security Council resolution 242 (1967). We have reaffirmed our commitment to peace with our participation in the Madrid conference and by our having agreed to offer an umbrella for PLO participation in the negotiations. Thanks to that participation, the PLO has at long last been recognized as an independent partner in the peace negotiations. That has enabled the PLO to sign with Israel the Declaration of Principles, which is truly the first serious step towards a peaceful, comprehensive solution of the Middle East conflict.

Thus, Jordan's political commitment is strategic in nature, for it is anchored in our conviction that just and comprehensive peace in the entire region is an essential need for all its countries and its peoples. If that long-awaited dream comes true, the whole region will usher in a new era in its history. That will be a driving force that would propel our countries into new vistas of stability and peaceful coexistence. It would offer to the peoples of the region hope of leading a normal life after having been denied that blessing for five decades.

The Government of Jordan is fully aware of the rugged terrain we are charting and of the potential potholes. Nevertheless, we are determined to forge ahead, against all the daunting odds, in order to pursue peace. We shall deal, together with the Israeli side, with any problems that might arise down the road with a true sense of responsibility and dedication. Our ultimate goal will be comprehensive peace. What is at stake are the interests of our people, which firmly believes in the soundness of our approach. Now we have to pray and work with the United Nations and all other parties towards one common goal.

Mr. SUCHARIPA (Austria): "They shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more." *(Isaiah 2:4)*

That is an urgent appeal voiced in a region thousands of years ago, in a region that has not been spared war, violence, chaos, tragedies or catastrophes throughout the centuries. Swords and spears may have gone many years ago, but they have been replaced by more dangerous and more devastating instruments of war, and misery and bitterness have continued, seemingly with no end in sight.

Until two years ago, Isaiah's appeal seemed to have remained unheard. Two years ago, in October 1991 in Madrid, all parties to the Middle East conflict sat around one negotiating table for the first time, deciding to talk to each other, both bilaterally and through a multilateral forum. From the very beginning it was clear that this process, aimed at reaching a just and lasting peace in the region and at overcoming deep-rooted enmities, would be protracted and that quick results or instant solutions should not and could not be expected.

Austria wholeheartedly welcomed the opening of the Madrid Conference, the entry into a new era. We also expressed our hope that all parties would agree to pursue the initiated dialogue as the only viable alternative to daily suffering, violence and bloodshed. As early as 1973, the then Austrian Federal Chancellor, Mr. Bruno Kreisky, made the following statement:

> "I do not believe that speaking to the Palestinians will endanger the existence of Israel. The time is ripe; we have to find viable partners for dialogue."

At long last this appeal has been realized.

Our support has always stemmed from our longstanding commitment to a peaceful, just, comprehensive and lasting solution to the manifold problems of the Middle East. Any solution must take into account the core issue of full implementation of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), as it must also reflect the land-for-peace principle.

The developments that became visible and tangible early this summer represent a great step forward, a step which we would not have considered possible a year ago. I would like explicitly to commend the mutual recognition of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and the ensuing signature on 13 September in Washington, D.C. of the Israeli-Palestinian Declaration of Principles. We believe that the Israeli Government, with Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and Foreign Minister Shimon Peres, and the Palestine Liberation Organization, under Chairman Yasser Arafat, deserve the respect of the international community for their decision, which was both visionary and courageous.

The limited autonomy of the Gaza Strip and the Jericho area, as foreseen in the Declaration of Principles, is certainly only a first step and a partial solution to the legitimate claims and aspirations of the Palestinian people, but it shows the constructive approach adopted by all parties. Austria hopes that these agreements between Israel and the PLO will give a vital new impetus to the entire Middle East peace process. We hope that further progress in the bilateral negotiations between Israel and Syria, Israel and Lebanon and - after the encouraging conclusion of a framework agreement for peace - between Israel and Jordan will soon be achieved so that, in the near future, a net of similar agreements will cover the whole region, guaranteeing stability, prosperity and lasting peace.

However, peace can be guaranteed only if the successes achieved at the negotiating table are reflected by conditions on the ground and if the various measures agreed upon are implemented without delay. Most recent events prove how fragile and vulnerable the atmosphere of mutual trust and understanding initiated on 13 September remains. Exposing it to setbacks and interruptions could still endanger the entire peace process and enhance frustration and radicalism on both sides. As a result, unfulfilled expectations, disappointment and bitterness would only lead to further outbreaks of violence. We therefore appeal to the parties in the region to do their utmost to avoid jeopardizing this precious momentum of peace and to show maximum restraint in their actions at these very crucial moments of a very difficult transitional process.

It is for the parties to the conflict themselves to prove their readiness to overcome old enmities, to reach across the deep rifts separating them and finally to start healing those rifts with confidence-building measures and deeds. Such actions are much more necessary than words, however promising they might sound. However, it is also up to the international community to lend its assistance, to back the process that has begun and especially to alleviate the ongoing plight of the Palestinians living in the occupied territories under extremely difficult economic, social and humanitarian circumstances. We are therefore satisfied with the outcome of the pledging conference that took place on 1 October in Washington, D.C. and I may recall in this context that Austria has committed itself to assistance to the Palestinians amounting to approximately $17 million over the next 5 years. We believe that concrete projects in the occupied territories, and especially in the Gaza Strip and the Jericho area, relating to

infrastructure, health care, agriculture and other job creating investments, are of utmost importance to meet the urgent needs of the Palestinian population. We also welcome the establishment of a high-level task force by the Secretary-General in response to requests from both Israel and the PLO. We are convinced that this task force, which will focus on the economic and social development of the Gaza Strip and Jericho, will play an important role in supporting a coordinated approach towards development in these areas.

Austria has also become a full-fledged partner of the multilateral peace negotiations. From the beginning, Austria has held the view that the multilateral peace process, as initiated in January 1992 in Moscow and conducted since then in five parallel working groups, is an important corollary to the bilateral peace negotiations. Austria has therefore appealed several times to all parties directly concerned to take an active part in the multilateral negotiations in order to achieve concrete and quick results. In this regard, I wish to reiterate the appeal to Syria and Lebanon to join the multilateral track as soon as possible. This would also benefit the bilateral process, as both tracks are interrelated and stimulate and invigorate each other.

Austria has not only taken an active part in the deliberations of all working groups; it has also in the meantime submitted concrete proposals for cooperation among the partners in the region. Thus, Austria is executing, together with the Commission of the European Communities, a feasibility study on the connection of electric networks in the Middle East. Furthermore, we intend to help build a basic health care administration in the occupied territories and to promote such environmental projects as a databank and the establishment of a code of conduct for the harmonization of national environmental regulations.

But Austria's active involvement in the multilateral peace process also involves our readiness to host meetings of working groups or intersessional activities. I recall that Vienna was the venue of the first meeting of the working group on water resources in May 1992, and that it hosted in June 1993 a water technology seminar and in October 1993 a seminar on confidence-building measures and long-term perspectives, all of which have turned out to be very useful additions to the activities of the working groups.

Peace in the Middle East has never been as near as it is today, peace that, with the help of us all, the parties directly concerned and the international community, could soon become reality, to the benefit of the entire region and its population. We hope that the ancient appeal will then have turned into a true prophecy: neither shall they learn war any more.

Mr. ACHARYA (Nepal): Nepal has been a staunch supporter of the Middle East Conference, launched in Madrid in 1991. We have been supportive of the painstaking consultations undertaken by the sponsors to move the process forward at a quicker pace. My delegation therefore fully shares the view that the signing of the Declaration of Principles by the leaders of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) was a historic breakthrough. I take this opportunity to pay tribute to the courage and vision of the leaders of Israel and the PLO. I wish also to place on record our appreciation of the important role the Government of Norway played in bringing about this breakthrough.

The Declaration has established a set of bold objectives. The first major step - the conclusion of negotiations on Israel's withdrawal from Gaza and Jericho, to be effective by April 1994 - is set for mid-December. Winning peace in the Middle East is up to the parties concerned. My delegation is heartened by the demonstrated desire for peace and by the determination to pursue negotiations in good faith on the part of the leadership of both Israel and the PLO. The continuation of negotiations and the realization of tangible results on the ground are important to keep the momentum alive.

It is equally essential that the Palestinian people have evidence that peace will make a difference in their lives. The international community has an important role to play in achieving this goal. The meeting held in Washington in October this year sent out a message of commitment to improving the living conditions of the Palestinian people in the short term and to putting in place a long-term structure for economic growth.

The ultimate goal of the process is to achieve a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the Middle East, in keeping with Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). The breakthrough in Israeli-PLO relations must be strengthened by progress in other tracks of bilateral negotiations. The progress in the Israel-Jordan talks is a welcome development.

Progress in the talks between Syria and Israel would be a crucial element of a comprehensive peace in the Middle East. Nepal sincerely hopes that both countries remain committed to a negotiated settlement of their dispute. Likewise, my delegation looks forward to early and tangible progress in the Israel-Lebanon negotiations. We support the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Lebanon. Our continued participation in the

United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon is an expression of this commitment.

The regional aspects of the peace process include crucial matters related to security, water, environment, economic development and refugees. Nepal supports the call to make the Middle East a zone free of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction. Accession by all States in the region to existing international instruments will be a major step in this direction. Participation of all countries in the region, and particularly of Syria and Lebanon, in the multilateral negotiations is essential for effective regional cooperation.

Because of its historic association with the situation, the United Nations has a vital role to play in strengthening the momentum towards a lasting and comprehensive peace in the Middle East. Several United Nations agencies, including the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, are engaged in valuable humanitarian work. The United Nations agencies responsible for operational activities for development have the challenge of working to broaden economic interaction throughout the region. The peace-keeping operations in the region, by maintaining stability within their respective mandates, are helping give peace a chance.

The Middle East was at the heart of the first post-cold-war international consensus to uphold the principle of the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by force. Given continued goodwill and determination, the Middle East can be the foundation of a peaceful and stable post-cold-war international order. The international community has a duty to encourage the march towards that goal.

Mr. BREITENSTEIN (Finland): In recent years we have seen events and developments in the world which would have been labelled wishful thinking only five years ago. The most recent and the most welcome was the historic handshake between Prime Minister Rabin and Chairman Arafat. The Declaration of Principles signed by Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), as well as their reciprocal recognition, manifest a historic change in the long conflict in the Middle East.

This was the first significant and concrete result of the Madrid process, initiated two years ago and co-chaired by the United States and the Russian Federation. The key factor which made the agreement between the PLO and Israel possible was the admirable personal courage and constructive approach of the leaders on both sides. However, the discreet and imaginative assistance rendered by Norway during the long and confidential negotiations also deserves the admiration of all of us.

The Government of Finland welcomes these agreements. We believe that the prerequisites for a comprehensive solution based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and for lasting peace in the region have now been created after decades of violence. Such a lasting peace can be achieved only by providing for the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people and the security of all States in the region, including Israel.

We hope that the agreements between Israel and the PLO will also contribute to agreements being reached in the peace negotiations between Israel and the other negotiating parties: Jordan - hopefully, soon to be concluded - Syria and Lebanon.

The events that have taken place to date demonstrate that it is indeed possible to make progress through peaceful negotiations. With this historic breakthrough, the Middle East peace process has taken a remarkable leap forward. It has provided an opportunity for all States in the region to find a new basis for their mutual relations.

To secure continued progress, the international community must do its share to help the parties in tangible ways. It is crucial that everybody is shown that peace will indeed bring its benefits, in the form of growing incomes, better standards of living, better services and, most of all, improved security.

Reconstruction in the areas to be brought under Palestinian self-rule should be launched without delay. International support for this demanding task will be of vital importance. It was gratifying, therefore, that some 45 donors, Finland among them, gathered in Washington, D.C., on 1 October 1993 and pledged altogether over $2 billion in aid, over five years, for Gaza and Jericho. This outstanding result gives us hope that our expectations can be fulfilled.

Finland, like the other Nordic countries, is committed to participating fully in the reconstruction and development efforts in Gaza and Jericho. At this point, an amount of 40 million Finnish markkaa has been pledged as our contribution for this purpose. Part of that sum - 10 million Finnish markkaa - will be available as early as this year for short-term needs, through the World Bank and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). The rest will be directed towards reconstruction and development projects in the Palestinian self-governing areas.

To create better living conditions, a solid economic basis is necessary. This will be achieved by creating an environment conducive to enterprise and trade rather than through a reliance on continued outside assistance.

Barriers to communications and trade in the region should therefore be lowered and even abolished.

We believe that normal, unhampered trade relations and economic cooperation would be of significant benefit to the whole region. Ending the trade boycott against Israel would be a constructive measure on the part of the Arab States.

Unfortunately, the favourable and encouraging developments are being overshadowed by continuing violence. The vicious circle of violence must be stopped, as it will cause nothing but suffering and destruction. Any disagreements must be expressed and solved peacefully. We therefore urge all parties and groups to refrain from all acts of violence. We trust that the authorities too will refrain from an excessive use of force in maintaining law and order, and that the law will be enforced for all alike.

We understand fully that the work has only just begun and that many obstacles remain. New solutions cannot be found overnight. However, through patient negotiation, mutual trust and a recognition of the other side's needs, progress can be made and this historic process transformed into action in concrete terms. In other words, confidence-building measures are required from all parties.

In this respect, it is essential that the necessary solutions are found to the practical problems by the target date of 13 December, thus enabling the implementation phase of the peace settlement to begin. We therefore urge both parties to continue their efforts towards that end in the same spirit of compromise and conciliation that they have already shown.

The United Nations, faithful to its mission, should make its contribution towards making this process a success. For it to be able to do so, its actions must be wise and likely to create confidence in its capacity to contribute in a meaningful and impartial manner.

In practical terms, over the years the United Nations has done valuable work in favour of the refugees. However, a number of past resolutions of the General Assembly have not been helpful. We hope that in this respect too we can turn the page on the past. My delegation therefore welcomes the spirit of cooperation that has made it possible to present a new draft resolution reflecting the progress made in the peace process. My delegation gives its full support to the draft resolution, and hopes that it will be approved by consensus.

PROGRAMME OF WORK

The PRESIDENT: I should like to inform members of a change in our programme of work. The consideration by the General Assembly of agenda item 42, "The situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina", originally scheduled for Friday, 3 December, is postponed to Friday, 17 December, in the morning.

The meeting rose at 5.55 p.m.

United Nations
GENERAL ASSEMBLY
FORTY-EIGHTH SESSION

Official Records

68th PLENARY MEETING

Thursday, 2 December 1993 at 10 a.m.

NEW YORK

President: Mr. INSANALLY (Guyana)

The meeting was called to order at 10.30 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 34 *(continued)*

THE SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST

(a) REPORTS OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (A/48/522, A/48/607)

(b) DRAFT RESOLUTION (A/48/L.32)

Mr. KEATING (New Zealand): There are indeed real grounds this year for unprecedented optimism as we address the situation in the Middle East. New Zealand joins others in warmly welcoming the recent dramatic breakthrough in the peace process begun in Madrid two years ago. The agreement on mutual recognition and the Declaration of Principles between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization, as well as the Agreement on the Common Agenda signed between Israel and Jordan, represent political understandings of historic importance. We congratulate all those involved, including the Government of Norway. This Organization can draw fresh encouragement that the objective to which it has so long committed itself - a just and lasting peace in the region in accordance with Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) - is both practicable and achievable. Continuing courage and determination by all the parties will be required to carry the process forward.

We believe that these developments set a new direction, but they are only part of the wider fabric of peace which the region needs. We hope that they will soon be followed by similar movement in negotiations between Israel and Syria, and Israel and Lebanon. For true stability all parties to this long-standing conflict must contribute to, and share the benefits of, a comprehensive settlement.

After so many years of bitterness and hostility, no one should underestimate the enormous difficulties that both the Israeli Government and the Palestinian leaders are facing in their ongoing negotiations. Their commitment must not fail now. Notwithstanding their new accord there are real problems, marked by continuing violence and tension. It is vital that Israelis and Palestinians alike halt the slide towards perilous instability by putting destructive disputes behind them.

The problems ahead are many and complex. They will undoubtedly continue to absorb younger generations of Palestinians and Israelis. If long-cherished hopes for peace and justice are to be maintained, the negotiators of today must keep up both direction and momentum. There must be a sense of realism.

The support of the international community will be crucial. The Palestinian people need help quickly to meet the challenges of self-government, to repair and develop their infrastructural needs and establish the economic engine of their future. In this respect we wish to record our great appreciation of and respect for the work being accomplished in the working groups of the so-called multilateral track. They represent true partnership between many countries. The issues are crucial to the stability and development of the whole region.

New Zealand has always sought to encourage progress towards a negotiated settlement. We remain firmly supportive of the Middle East process and we will continue

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our dialogue with Israel and with the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), as well as with the other parties principally involved. We recognize the very valuable assistance that the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) has provided to the region and we will continue to give it our support as well.

More generally, New Zealand remains concerned about the huge and destabilizing flow of armaments into the Middle East. There can be no lasting peace and security in the region without a halt to this trade and the promotion of broadly based arms-reduction efforts. There is sadly still a long way to go before a sufficiently improved climate can be created to translate such goals as a Middle East zone free of all weapons of mass destruction into a reality. We believe that efforts towards greater transparency, and therefore confidence, among the States of the region remain vital building blocks for substantive arms control and disarmament measures and for lasting peace. We continue to support and to follow with interest the ongoing dialogue within the Working Group on Arms Control and Regional Security which was established as part of the Madrid framework.

Mr. AWAD (Syrian Arab Republic) *(interpretation from Arabic)*: Since 1970, the General Assembly has continued to consider the item relating to the situation in the Middle East at every annual session and has continued to reaffirm, time after time, that peace in the Middle East is an indivisible whole that should be based on a just and comprehensive solution to the problem in conformity with the relevant United Nations resolutions in a manner that will ensure the complete withdrawal of Israel from the Arab territories it has occupied since 1967.

The convening of the Madrid Peace Conference more than two years ago was an historic opportunity to achieve the aspired-for peace on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978), which are fully binding resolutions that must be implemented by all the parties to the dispute under the United Nations Charter. Notwithstanding, however, the peace process continues to be stalled as a result of the intransigence of the Israeli side that insists on distorting the Madrid points of reference which are clear enough since they are based on the logic of international legality and the need to achieve peace in the Middle East region as a world objective that is imposed by the necessities of the post-cold-war era so as to put paid to dangerous hotbeds of conflict, particularly since the Arab-Israeli conflict is one of the oldest and most dangerous of such conflicts.

The manner in which Israel leaps over the fixed elements and the principles of the peace process has dashed the hopes generated by the Madrid Conference in reaching a just and comprehensive solution. Over the two years of peace negotiations in Madrid and Washington not one single position taken by Israel has led anyone to the belief that Israel is serious in its handling of the peace process and the fixed objective of that process, namely the establishment of a comprehensive and just peace, based on the implementation of Security Council resolutions and the land-for-peace principle. To the contrary, all Israel's positions fall under the heading of rejecting the peace of the Madrid formula and of creating one obstacle after another with the aim of stalling the peace process and preventing the eleven rounds of negotiation from making any progress towards the achievement of peace.

The peace process, that began in Madrid in 1991, was launched with the aim of reaching a comprehensive solution and not of reaching the sort of separate partial solutions that have proved to be ineffectual in achieving security, stability and peace in the region. Consequently, the Gaza-Jericho agreement, which was engineered outside the context of the peace talks, cannot be viewed as a solution to the region's crisis.

That being the case, the Arab States have stressed the fact that the Palestinian-Israeli agreement is a first step that should be completed by urgent steps on all the other tracks to ensure Israel's withdrawal from the entire occupied Syrian Golan and the Lebanese territory. This proceeded from the conviction of the Council of the Arab League that in order for peace to be permanent, it must be comprehensive, just, and based on the relevant Security Council resolutions and the norms of international legality.

The policy of separating the tracks, the splintering of peace and solutions on the various fronts, the provocative statements made daily by Israeli officials, who cling to the settlement policy, to the occupation of Al-Quds, to the rejection of withdrawal to the 4 June 1967 boundaries and to the freezing and ignoring of the other tracks in the interests of implementing the agreement with the Palestine Liberation Organization, all these are indicators of the absence of any desire to achieve a comprehensive and just peace.

The Israeli statements that aim at side-stepping the requirement of comprehensiveness in any viable solution are clear indications of the absence of that desire. Various pretexts are used. For example, Israeli officials say they need more time to digest the Palestine-Israeli agreement. This is a pretext that may be valid in relation to fighting a war on several fronts, but how could it be valid in relation to peace?

Against the backdrop of this Israeli policy that bespeaks a determination to shrug off any commitment to the elements that would ensure the achievement of a just and comprehensive peace, we have to ask ourselves: what kind of peace does Israel want if it refuses withdrawal, if it hangs on to the policy of settlement and if it pursues a policy that simply refuses to recognize legitimate Arab rights? What sort of peace does Israel want if it continues to work diligently to entrench and perpetuate its occupation of Al-Quds and if it continues to speak of a partial withdrawal from the Golan?

Syria is committed to the points of reference that it has accepted - points on the basis of which the Madrid Conference was convened. It will remain fully committed to the application of the principles of international legality and to the land-for-peace principle. Syria will not accept anything that runs counter to the requirements of a comprehensive and just peace. Syria has summed up those requirements as being complete withdrawal in return for comprehensive peace in accordance with the relevant Security Council resolutions, which stipulate that it is inadmissible to acquire land by force and which call for the withdrawal of Israeli forces to the lines of 4 June 1967 and for ending Israel's occupation of southern Lebanon.

If Israel's rulers are really serious about peace they have to declare their commitment to international legality and to its resolutions in that regard, as well as to the land-for-peace principle. They must announce also that they are prepared to withdraw from all the occupied Arab territories. By so doing, they will make it possible to discuss the requirements of peace and the achievement of security and stability for all the countries of the region.

We truly and sincerely wish to see an end to the Arab-Israeli conflict and to see tension and wars in the region defused and ended. For us, peace is a strategic objective, but it must not be secured at the expense of land or rights. A stable peace in the region is impossible to achieve in the presence of occupation, and it could not continue in the presence of injustice, oppression and the usurpation of rights. Until Arab territories are returned to their rightful owners and Arab rights are restored, it will not be possible to speak of real peace in the Middle East.

Regardless of any regional or international balance of power, the right of peoples to their lands is fundamental and is not a subject for discussion. No one can hide the facts, erase the inalienable rights of peoples or simply cancel out the history of nations and peoples struggling for full freedom, independence and undiminished sovereignty.

I should like, in conclusion, to point out that the draft resolution regarding the occupied Syrian Golan, which is before the General Assembly in the context of the agenda item "The situation in the Middle East", does not contain any hostile language, but simply states the facts. Syria's main reason for presenting it is to remind the international community that the Syrian Golan is still under Israeli occupation and that Israel's annexation of it is null and void and is rejected by the international community. The draft resolution is also intended to remind Israel that it has not yet withdrawn from the Golan.

We do not want this draft resolution to affect the ongoing peace process in any way or to be interpreted as an impediment to that process.

Mr. ABDUL GHAFFAR (Bahrain) *(interpretation from Arabic):* Given its importance and its effect on international peace and security, the Middle East is one of the sensitive regions of the world. Given the situation's implications for other regions, the re-establishing and stabilizing of peace in the region are of vital importance to the whole world in view of the effect this would have on the other regions of the world. This requires the deployment by the international community of intensive efforts to achieve a peaceful, just and equitable settlement to the Israeli-Arab conflict.

No peaceful settlement in the region could be reached in a piecemeal fashion. Therefore, equal importance must be attached to all the other tracks in order to ensure a just, comprehensive settlement. In our view, it is extremely important to emphasize the following two elements with regard to any peaceful settlement; first, no settlement can be successful unless it leads to Israel's withdrawal from the occupied Arab territories, including Al-Quds, in accordance with Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973); and secondly, the question of Palestine is at the very core of the Middle East conflict. No settlement that fails to resolve that question could ever lead to comprehensive peace in the absence of an overall integral approach that would enable the Palestinian people to exercise its inalienable rights.

A few days ago I made a statement on the item entitled "Question of Palestine" in which I noted that my country views the signing in Washington, D.C., on 13 September 1993 of the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements as an important step towards the settlement of the question of Palestine and as a first stage in the process leading to an equitable solution to that question of Palestine and to the Arab-Israeli conflict. Let me make it clear that the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination is a fundamental principle that must be taken into consideration

in the Middle East peace negotiations which should lead to the establishment of an independent Palestinian State.

Although there have been positive developments in regard to the question of Palestine such as the signing of the Declaration of Principles by the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and the Israeli Government, yet we cannot see any real progress in the negotiations between Syria and the Israeli Government. We are convinced that any solution on the Syrian track must involve Israel's complete withdrawal from the Golan and the dismantlement of its settlements, in accordance with the resolutions of international legality. We hope the negotiations between Syria and Israel will move forward towards that goal.

Parts of the Lebanese territory are still under Israeli occupation. Furthermore, the inhabitants of southern Lebanon continue to be the targets of continuing Israeli acts of aggression with the result that many of them have been forced to flee from their homes in order to escape the ravages of the onslaughts of the Israeli military machine, which is completely oblivious to the suffering of civilians, as we saw last summer. We call upon Israel, in this respect, to implement Security Council resolution 425 (1978), which stipulates the immediate, unconditional withdrawal of Israeli forces from the territory of Lebanon. We cannot but emphasize once again our commitment to upholding Lebanon's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized boundaries.

We attach great importance to the question of weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East because of the grave threat it poses to the security and stability of the region. Israel's pursuit of its nuclear programmes outside international monitoring does not serve the cause of peace, security and stability in the Middle East. Therefore, it is essential, in the interests of confidence-building, which is one of the practical underpinnings of the ongoing peace process, that Israel should accede to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and submit its nuclear installations to the safeguards regime of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). We have supported initiatives to rid the Middle East of all nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction in the interest of our present and future generations. Given their importance for the region as a whole, we hope those two initiatives will be implemented.

My delegation considers that the United Nations has an important role to play on the question of the Middle East in view of its experience over the past few years in helping resolve regional conflicts in many parts of the world. Moreover, its experience in the region and in peace-keeping and monitoring operations qualify the Organization to play a constructive and positive role in any possible peaceful settlement in the Middle East.

The international community's determination to find peaceful solutions to regional conflicts is a positive sign for the Middle East. That is why it is important to intensify efforts to achieve a comprehensive, just and lasting solution to the problems of the region now that the peace process has taken significant steps towards a peaceful settlement. It is vital that any solution be based on international law and on the principles of the Charter, and on the relevant resolutions of the United Nations. At the same time, the international community should call upon Israel to implement those international resolutions in order to achieve lasting peace in the region.

Mr. HATANO (Japan): This is a time of dramatic change in the Middle East. The agreement signed in September by Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) has generated momentum for peace throughout the region. Of course, much hard work remains to be done, and many pitfalls lie ahead; nevertheless, genuine progress is being made towards the achievement of peace in the Middle East.

While the Palestinian issue is at the very heart of the Arab-Israeli conflict, comprehensive peace in the region will never be achieved unless there is peace between Israel and Syria. I earnestly hope that progress is made on this track before too long.

Our attention is also drawn to Lebanon, a country that has long been troubled by political instability due to internal and external turmoil, including the wider Middle East conflict. Although the Taif Agreement brought Lebanon out of civil war, it has by no means been fully implemented, and I urge all parties concerned to work in good faith towards that end. At the same time, it is essential that the Lebanese Government establish effective control throughout its territory.

The civil war and related violence have had devastating effects on Lebanon's economy and society. The reconstruction of the nation and the development of a stable and democratic society will require the assistance of the international community as a whole. Japan, for its part, is ready to support such efforts.

Another international concern is terrorist activity in the region. Terrorism is a challenge to every nation in the world; the fight against it must therefore be a collective effort. Japan has committed itself to the elimination of all forms of terrorism and to cutting off all assistance to terrorist groups.

In this regard, I cannot but note that little progress has been made in gaining Libya's cooperation in efforts to clarify the facts surrounding the downing of flights Pan Am 103 and UTA 772, among whose victims was a Japanese national. As a consequence of Libya's non-compliance with resolutions 731 (1992) and 748 (1992), the Security Council adopted resolution 883 (1993) last month. Japan once again urges the Libyan Government to comply fully with these Security Council resolutions without further delay.

The intransigence of the Iraqi Government also poses a threat to regional stability. Particularly disturbing is Iraq's rejection of its boundary with Kuwait as demarcated by the United Nations. The supposedly spontaneous demonstrations by hundreds of Iraqi citizens along the Kuwaiti border on 16 and 20 November call into question the Government's political will and intentions. Moreover, the Government's economic blockade of the Kurds in the north and its oppression of the population in the south demonstrate a disregard for human life. The whereabouts and conditions of the 600 Kuwaitis missing since Iraq's invasion of Kuwait are another concern. The Iraqi Government has not complied with requests from the International Committee of the Red Cross for access to or information on these Kuwaiti nationals.

On the other hand, just last week Iraq did demonstrate a willingness to cooperate with the United Nations Special Commission and accepted long-term monitoring of its weapons of mass destruction, as called for in Security Council resolution 715 (1991). We welcome this attitude and hope that Iraq's words will be translated into positive actions. I reiterate Japan's appeal to Iraq to comply with all the other relevant Security Council resolutions as well.

The situation in the Middle East has been a focus of concern for the General Assembly for more than four decades. We must not retreat from the hard-won progress achieved so far, but must maintain the momentum for a comprehensive peace.

Mr. OSVALD (Sweden): The Middle East is entering a new era. The historic handshake between Prime Minister Rabin of Israel and Chairman Arafat of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) in Washington, D.C. a few months ago added a totally new dimension to the situation in the region. Traditional perceptions were shattered. The deep-rooted enemy images that each side had nurtured over decades of bloody conflict were radically changed.

We all know that the parties still disagree on several issues of fundamental importance but - and this is what is new and of overriding importance - Israel and the PLO have now committed themselves to jointly seeking solutions to their problems. Postures of confrontation are turning into a partnership. This will be of immeasurable benefit not only to the Israelis, the Palestinians and the Middle East as a region but also to the international community as a whole.

Sweden salutes the courage and statesmanship demonstrated by the leaders of Israel and the PLO. The Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements signed by Israel and the PLO on 13 September 1993 is a first and very important step towards a just, comprehensive and lasting peace in the Middle East based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). Sweden expresses its full support for the patient endeavours of the sponsors of the Peace Conference on the Middle East - the United States and the Russian Federation - to promote the peace process. We would also like to express our admiration for the skilful diplomatic efforts of Norway that helped produce the Israeli-Palestinian breakthrough.

A lasting peace in the Middle East must be comprehensive. Sweden therefore encourages the parties to make progress on all the tracks of the peace process. In this context, we welcome the agreement between Jordan and Israel on the Common Agenda. We strongly hope that the two countries will soon be in a position to make substantive progress in their bilateral talks. Furthermore, Sweden hopes that the bilateral negotiations between Israel and Syria and between Israel and Lebanon will soon lead to concrete results in accordance with the relevant Security Council resolutions.

An essential prerequisite for any settlement in the Middle East is the recognition of Israel's right to exist within secure and internationally recognized borders. At the same time, the legitimate rights of Israel's neighbours must be fully respected. Sweden supports the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination, including the right to form their own State if they so desire. The practical implications of this need to be discussed in the final status negotiations between Israel and the PLO.

In line with the carefully crafted timetable in the Declaration of Principles, life in the occupied territories will soon change. Israeli forces will withdraw from positions in Gaza and Jericho. Authority will be transferred to the Palestinians in the fields of education and culture, health, social welfare, direct taxation and tourism. Difficulties in the negotiations between the parties must be overcome so as not to endanger the agreed timetable.

It goes without saying that the international community must do its utmost to contribute to the

realization of these concrete aspects of the peace process. Making it possible for the Palestinians fully to express their national identity, together with an improvement in their living conditions, will help to consolidate peace and security for all. It is thus clearly in our interest to promote reconciliation and improved prospects for economic and social development. This will reduce tensions and inspire hope for the future. Furthermore, in such a positive climate, the arguments of the sceptics and rejectionists on both sides will sound increasingly hollow.

During the current fiscal year, Sweden's assistance to the Palestinians on the West Bank and Gaza will increase to approximately $28 million. The bulk of the assistance is channelled through the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), and the bilateral support is mainly dedicated to three sectors: health, support for human rights organizations, and the development and strengthening of Palestinian institutions. Sweden calls upon the international community, including the international financial institutions and non-governmental organizations, to be actively involved in and contribute generously to development projects in the West Bank and Gaza.

If they are to have a maximum impact, it is essential that contributions from the international donor community be coordinated in an efficient manner. For the actual implementation on the ground, we believe that the existing channels, such as UNRWA and other United Nations agencies with long experience in the region, should be used as much as possible. At the same time, the World Bank plays a useful role as a multilateral clearing-house on the macro level. In addition, the Palestinians themselves have a major role and responsibility in the creation of an appropriate institutional framework for absorbing the international assistance and directing it to priority projects. We urge the Palestinian leadership to take immediate measures in this regard.

Sweden deeply deplores the recent acts of violence in the occupied territories with the intention of jeopardizing the peace process. The vicious circle of violence and counter-violence must be broken. All parties must exercise their authority to achieve this end. Unfortunately, there are still reports of repressive measures being taken by the Israeli security forces against the Palestinian population. The human rights of the Palestinians must be respected, and we urge Israel to recognize the full applicability of the Fourth Geneva Convention to the occupied territories.

In order to enhance a positive atmosphere for negotiations, the parties should start implementing a series of confidence-building measures. For example, Israel should continue its freeze on the construction of new settlements and stop the expansion of existing ones. Furthermore, the closure of the occupied territories needs to be lifted. The Arab States, for their part, should immediately end their boycott of Israel. Individually or jointly, the States of the region should take measures to safeguard the ecological balance, a clean environment and an equitable distribution of the water supply, all necessary conditions for peace and stability.

Sweden participates actively in all the working groups in the multilateral part of the Madrid process. In the working group on refugees, we coordinate issues relating to the welfare of children.

The importance of the work in the multilateral negotiations for the Middle East as a region can hardly be overestimated. Substantive progress on the different bilateral tracks of the peace process will undoubtedly provide an invaluable impetus to the multilateral working groups, and vice versa.

Through the joint search for solutions to common regional problems relating to such matters as water resources, protection of the environment, economic development, refugees, and disarmament and security, the States in the Middle East may at long last be able to go from confrontation to cooperation.

By addressing these concrete and practical issues, a web of regional interactions may emerge, creating new relationships of mutual interdependence. Increased trade, the exchange of people and information, the transfer of technological and scientific know-how and, last but not least, exchanges in the fields of culture and sports may become reality.

We can now glimpse the possibility that, one day, the vast human and material resources of the countries in the Middle East will be pooled in joint projects, enhancing the well-being and security of all.

In the Declaration of Principles, the Palestinian people and the Israeli people recognized their mutual political rights. They seek to live in peaceful coexistence and mutual dignity and security within the framework of a just, lasting and comprehensive peace. Recent experience in different parts of the world has shown us how complex a peace process of this kind can be. Success requires strong and steadfast backing from the entire international community. Let us therefore give our full support to the peace process at this historic juncture.

Mr. AL-NI'MAH (Qatar) *(interpretation from Arabic)*: It is a pleasure for me to stand before this international Assembly to take up the situation in the

Middle East, the region to which my country belongs - a region which has long suffered from problems which have resulted from lack of respect for the principles and provisions of the United Nations Charter and the rules of international law.

At the head of this list of problems is, undoubtedly, the Arab-Israeli conflict, which has moved into a new and historic stage following a long period of suffering and bitter conflict - a conflict which kept the Middle East in shackles and which created a hell for that region, a conflict which long threatened conflagration, a dark conflict in which one could not discern the smallest hope of understanding or compassion. But now, after all of that, we can finally make out the light at the end of the tunnel as we move towards a new and historic era where peace supplants conflict. This comes as a result of the agreement between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization on those principles by which the Palestinians in the occupied territories may satisfy their aspirations to self-determination following a specific period of self-rule.

It is a source of the gravest concern to witness the continuing acts of violence in the Gaza Strip and in the Jericho area. We had hoped that such practices would end with the upcoming Israeli withdrawal from Gaza, set to take place in less than two weeks, according to the agreement between the two parties.

Perhaps I would not be exaggerating if I were to say that when those difficulties standing in the way of the implementation of the Israeli-Palestinian agreement are overcome, we hope that the peace process will move forward along the other tracks as well, particularly on the Syrian-Israeli and Lebanese-Israeli tracks. This is something we look forward to and something we aspire to. We hope that this will take place in the near future so that a just, durable and comprehensive solution to the question of Palestine and to the Arab-Israeli dispute can be found based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) - those two resolutions which embody the land-for-peace principle as well as the mutual recognition of the sovereignty and security of the States of the region within internationally recognized borders.

Any astute observer of the Middle East will realize the importance of the Gulf, which is a vital part of the Middle East region. The two consecutive wars that our region has suffered in one decade lead us to attach a particular importance to the question of peace and stability in the Middle East. The State of Qatar believes that security and stability in the Gulf cannot be obtained without cooperative relations between the States of the region themselves, relations based on good neighbourliness; mutual trust; non-interference in internal affairs; respect of internationally recognized borders; and the settlement of disputes and disagreements between the States of the region by peaceful means - the means of dialogue, mediation and international law, as provided for by the Charter of the United Nations.

It is most important for us to reaffirm the need for this international Organization to protect the sovereignty of the State of Kuwait as well as its territorial integrity within its international borders. Those borders must be respected, as provided for by Security Council resolution 833 (1993). Furthermore, we call on the brother country of Iraq fully to respect all relevant Security Council resolutions, and particularly resolution 687 (1991) in all its provisions.

This, in turn, will help in establishing stability and security in our region while guaranteeing Iraq's territorial unity and the unity of its people as well as its territorial integrity.

On the fiftieth anniversary of the independence of our beloved Lebanon, we salute our sister country that has suffered a lengthy civil war and foreign invasion; we salute the struggle and steadfastness of its people. We look with admiration on the efforts Lebanon is making for political stability and for its security and rehabilitation. The State of Qatar, which has a sense of national duty in this regard, is helping to promote the sovereignty of Lebanon and to satisfy our brothers' appeal for assistance for rehabilitation.

We reaffirm the need for complete and unconditional implementation of Security Council resolution 425 (1978) calling for complete Israeli withdrawal from the occupied Lebanese territory. We look forward to seeing a Lebanon that is once again proud, the Lebanon which was and is the home of all noble values, Lebanon living once again in prosperity, peace and security. May Lebanon once again take its place in the march of human history and civilization.

We appeal to Israel to read the history of Lebanon in a manner that would allow for conciliation and understanding, that would enable goodwill to be shown and that would make it possible to take the vitally necessary measures to help build bridges of confidence and strengthen and deepen the belief in cooperation and understanding and the belief that these highest, most noble values must be respected. None of this can be achieved unless Israel first, and most important, undertakes to implement all the provisions of Security Council resolution 425 (1978).

Any thinking person must realize that the continuing occupation of Arab territory, including the occupation of the Syrian Golan Heights, has imposed on all those living

there a hell of complications, including terrible material and psychological living conditions, conditions of oppression and turmoil. To remedy this siutation, further efforts are required towards taking the necessary measures to build bridges of confidence and show more goodwill and good intentions; this would deepen the commitment of all those in the occupied territories to the success of the peace process, to safeguarding the peace process and to achieving the continuation and further progress of that process.

The common denominator is the building of bridges of confidence. This is a responsibility that falls on more than one pair of shoulders, and the more parties carry that responsibility, the more likely it is that the peace process will bear fruit.

Consequently, the United Nations must continue and redouble its efforts in its vital role in the area of international cooperation and international legality; confidence-building and a commitment to the values of peaceful coexistence are again the cornerstones here. Given its responsibility in this area and in terms of the need to build confidence, we would stress the need for the United Nations and its various agencies to play their vitally important role of covering all the economic, political, social and developmental aspects of this march towards peace as a necessary condition for the peace process to move forward and succeed.

The political and economic stability of the Middle East is closely intertwined with another important problem: arms control. We therefore call on the international community to stand shoulder to shoulder in mobilizing further efforts to put an end to the arms race in that region. The region itself must mobilize all its capabilities and resources to build the progress and prosperity to which it aspires. Arms control and an end to the arms race must apply to all States in the region without exception.

The State of Qatar insists on the need to free the region from weapons of mass destruction, and particularly nuclear weapons. My country reaffirms the need for all States in the region, without exception, to accede to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

The Middle East region, which has suffered so long as a hotbed of tension and a battlefield for armed, overt and covert conflicts, must now enjoy the stability its peoples need for their economies to develop and for their standards of living to rise; the dawning indications that there will be solutions to most of the problems of the region is something we truly welcome, and we hope that this desired end will be reached in the near future.

Mr. ROWE (Australia): The past few months have seen profound and historic changes in the situation in the Middle East that have at last laid the foundations for a comprehensive settlement to the dispute which for so long has bitterly divided Israel and its Arab neighbours and deprived the people of the region of peace, security and prosperity. The Declaration of Principles signed by Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), in Washington on 13 September 1993, outlining a plan for an interim Palestinian authority in Gaza and Jericho and setting a timetable for negotiations on the permanent status of the occupied territories, was a vital breakthrough in the search for a comprehensive settlement.

The countries of the region and the wider international community now have a clear responsibility to harness the momentum created by these encouraging developments and secure a just and lasting peace. Like other responsible countries, Australia has a deep interest in the region and is concerned at the implications for global security of conflict in the region.

Australia's policy towards the Middle East is based on two main premises: a total commitment to Israel's right to exist within secure and recognized boundaries and recognition of the Palestinian people's right of self-determination, including their right, if they so choose, to independence and the possibility of an independent State.

Australia has for many years supported a comprehensive solution to the Middle East dispute based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), which call for Israel's withdrawal from territories occupied during the 1967 war and respect for and acknowledgment of the sovereignty of all States in the region and their right to live in peace within secure boundaries. We therefore warmly welcome the signing of the Declaration of Principles which, we believe, has the potential to become the basis of such a comprehensive and lasting solution. The Israel-PLO agreement is, however, only the first step in what will be a long and difficult journey to peace.

The challenge the international community now faces is twofold: to ensure that the agreement allowing Palestinian autonomy in Gaza and Jericho does not founder for lack of economic and political support and to nurture progress in the other bilateral tracks of negotiation to match that achieved between Israel and the PLO. In recognition of the importance of the first of these challenges, Australia has committed $A 15 million over three years to support the implementation of the Gaza-Jericho accord. These funds will be spent on development activities crucial to the success of the new

Palestinian administration, such as income generation, training, health, sanitation and water resources. We believe that, if support for the peace agreement is to be maintained among the Palestinian people, it must bring immediate and significant benefits to their lives. Accordingly, we urge the international community to continue to provide economic support and practical assistance to the new Palestinian administration.

Australia also calls on Israel and the PLO to cooperate in maintaining the spirit of the Declaration of Principles and in implementing its clauses. It is a matter of some concern to us that the construction of settlements in and around East Jerusalem continues. Such action risks both undermining the basis on which the permanent-status negotiations are planned and eroding the confidence of the Palestinian people in the Israel-PLO agreement. The potential for violence from rejectionist elements on both sides to upset the accord is very real. We urge both Israel and the PLO to pursue a vigilant but balanced approach to controlling those who resort to violence.

The second challenge is no less important. The optimism accompanying the Declaration of Principles must not be allowed to draw attention away from the need for Israel, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon to continue to make progress towards their own peace agreements. Australia was pleased to note the agreement between Israel and Jordan on the Common Agenda for their negotiations, and we encourage both parties to strive for an early conclusion of a formal peace.

Australia calls on Israel, Syria and Lebanon to redouble their efforts to narrow their differences and find a common basis for peace. It is clear that the principle which will serve as the foundation for future peace agreements between Israel and Syria and between Israel and Lebanon is already accepted by all sides: territorial concessions by Israel in return for guarantees of security for Israel, including through the establishment of a full peace. We urge all parties to pursue settlements on this basis.

Australia continues to be encouraged by the progress made in Lebanon towards national reconciliation. We continue to oppose any activity by outside forces that compromises Lebanon's sovereignty. We unequivocally maintain our support for the early implementation of Security Council resolution 425 (1978), and we hope that the situation in Lebanon will soon permit the withdrawal of all foreign forces from that country.

Australia believes that, given the recent positive developments, it is in the best interests of further progress in the negotiations that all parties adopt positive and forward-looking policies that serve to build confidence and nurture an atmosphere of cooperation. Now is not the time to maintain the remnants of outdated policies of the past that can only obstruct cooperation and hinder peace.

We therefore consider that the Arab economic boycott of Israel, a symbol of Arab hostility to israel, has no place as a negotiating point in the peace process. We believe that the boycott unnecessarily constrains the economic development of the region and, in particular, that it may restrict the development of the new Palestinian administration. Australia calls on the members of the Arab League to dismantle the boycott as a practical and concrete step towards peace and towards consolidating the agreements already achieved.

There can be no doubt that the Israel-PLO accord has given great impetus to the multilateral arm of the peace process. The recent meetings of the five multilateral working groups have demonstrated the potential for practical benefits flowing from a positive, cooperative approach to such important regional issues as security, economic development, water resources, the environment and refugees.

Australia is pleased to be participating in the multilateral track of the peace process. We are particularly committed to involvement in the working groups on arms control and regional security and on water resources. These are both areas where Australia has demonstrated experience and expertise and where we judge we will be able to make a significant and needed contribution to the future stability and prosperity of the region.

Australia hopes that in the light of the growing importance and relevance of the multilateral negotiations, Lebanon and Syria will end their opposition to participation in this phase of the process and share in the benefits of regional cooperation. We believe that Lebanon in particular, with the daunting challenge of national reconstruction ahead of it, has much to gain from participation in the multilateral negotiations.

Australia will continue to encourage all States of the region to work constructively towards the objective of achieving in the Middle East a zone free of all weapons of mass destruction. The achievement of that objective would provide an important basis for the enhancement of regional security. We urge all Middle East States which have not yet done so to adhere to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, and we call on all parties to that Treaty to abide strictly by their obligations thereunder.

Australia continues to support fully the action taken by the Security Council on Iraq, including the continuing task of dismantling Iraq's weapons of mass destruction and investigating its weapons programmes. In that regard, Australia welcomes Iraq's decision to accept unconditionally Security Council resolution 715 (1991), which sets the framework for the long-term monitoring of Iraq's programme of weapons of mass destruction. Australia calls on Iraq to implement fully and unconditionally its other obligations as set by the Security Council and to do so without delay.

We are particularly concerned about the situation of civilian groups in Iraq and also call upon the Iraqi Government to ensure, in line with Security Council resolution 688 (1991), that all of its citizens enjoy equal human and political rights.

Responsibility for the welfare of the Iraqi people rests ultimately with the Iraqi Government. Australia again urges the Government of Iraq to cooperate with the Security Council in implementing those resolutions which would allow it to resume oil exports so that the hardships that are evident among the civilian population can be addressed.

Australia also supports the Security Council's action on Libya, most recently the adoption of additional sanctions under resolution 883 (1993). We again urge Libya to comply fully with the Security council's requirements as set out in resolutions 731 (1992), 748 (1992) and 883 (1993).

In conclusion, we find ourselves at a crucial stage in what we hope will be a journey to a just and lasting peace in the Middle East. The signing of the Declaration of Principles between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization has injected a new sense of purpose and direction into that journey, provided a new momentum, and allowed us to glimpse the potential benefits of peaceful endeavour and cooperation. We must not let this momentum stall.

Now is the time to leave behind the accusatory rhetoric and pejorative resolutions of the past, and to break free from familiar inflexible and unworkable political stances. But in doing so we must not allow euphoria at real progress to divert our attention from the many serious problems that remain. We must seek to consolidate what we have already achieved. We urge the parties to the negotiations to capitalize on the positive atmosphere, and we urge the international community to maintain and increase its practical support, to counsel flexibility and restraint, to nurture and to nudge. Above all, we urge all parties to the peace process to accept that it is now time to look forward, not back.

We must all acknowledge, in spirit and in actions, that the benefits of a comprehensive settlement will be far-reaching: not only for peace, stability and ultimately prosperity for the region, but also as a significant contribution to global security.

Mr. REMIREZ DE ESTENOZ (Cuba) *(interpretation from Spanish)*: We are pleased to participate in this debate on the items related to Palestine and the Middle East under the new conditions created by the signing on 13 September last by the Government of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization of the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements for Palestine. We believe that the signing of this agreement constitutes an important step in the process which must inexorably lead to the restoration of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people and to a solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict. It therefore constitutes progress towards the attainment of the objective of achieving a just, comprehensive and lasting peace in the Middle East.

The simultaneous mutual recognition by the two parties has also contributed to redressing some of the main failings of the Peace Conference that began in Madrid. Now, recognition of Palestine's political and national identity goes hand in hand with recognition of the right of the Palestine Liberation Organization to negotiate in that Conference, directly and on an equal footing, on behalf of its people.

In spite of the joy with which the international community initially welcomed the signing of the Washington agreements, we must recognize that the road ahead is long and complex and undoubtedly fraught with obstacles. We hope that the implementation of the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements in Palestine will begin auspiciously - that is, with strict compliance with its initial provisions, above all the withdrawal by Israel from the Gaza Strip and Jericho, beginning on 13 December 1993 and concluding as scheduled.

We believe that strict compliance with the agreements reached thus far and negotiations in good faith on the many aspects that remain to be concluded will contribute to creating at last the confidence necessary for the full implementation of the relevant resolutions of the Security Council and the General Assembly, in particular Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), which lay the foundations for the full exercise of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, including its right to self-determination and to its own State, and which

guarantee secure borders for all the States of the region, including Israel.

It is vital in this context that the negotiations that will now be held on the return of Palestinian refugees to their homes, on settlements in the occupied Arab territories, on the delimitation of the future borders of the two States, and on Jerusalem bear fruit also, so that the process that has been initiated will not be thwarted.

It is also essential that an end be put to Israel's policy of repression of the Palestinian people. We are concerned by recent reports of new outbreaks of violence in the occupied territories that have taken more Palestinian lives. The policies and practices of Israel, of its security forces and of the inhabitants of the illegal settlements in the occupied territories, which violate the human rights of the Palestinian people and contravene the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, must come to an end. Israel must recognize without delay the applicability of that Convention to all the occupied territories, as the Security Council and the General Assembly have repeatedly demanded.

The decades of occupation have produced a constant deterioration in the living conditions of the Palestinian people and an erosion of their economic and social situation. It is also fundamental, if the process that is now beginning is to be concluded in a satisfactory way, and for the sake of the peace and stability of that important region of the world, to restore to the Palestinian people its self-sufficiency, so that it can proceed to rebuild the occupied territories and to progress autonomously on the path of development.

For this purpose, a concerted effort by the international community is needed, both through bilateral channels and through our Organization's mechanisms of cooperation. In this respect, we welcome the results of the International Donors' Conference to Support Middle East Peace, held on 1 October 1993, and we urge all those in a position to do so to contribute generously to the reconstruction of Palestine.

The activities undertaken by the various agencies of the United Nations over the past 40 years to help restore the rights of the Palestinian people and alleviate the suffering caused by occupation are commendable, but our Organization's role with respect to Palestine has not ended. The organs in charge of this question must coordinate their work so as to continue to contribute to eliminating the condemnable practices that still persist and their consequences; at the same time, they must participate in the various stages of the peace process that has been initiated and thus continue to exercise the rightful responsibility of the United Nations with respect to Palestine until the objective of peace in the Middle East is achieved.

The General Assembly and the Security Council should carry out the appropriate monitoring of the implementation of the Declaration of Principles, in spite of the fact that this agreement was negotiated outside the framework of the United Nations, and should also closely follow any agreements subsequently reached. An important role in this respect must be played by the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, which has the ability and the experience to fulfil this qualitatively new task.

At the same time, we believe the time has come to increase the number of members of that Committee. The peace process requires the efforts of the entire international community, and it may now be possible for countries that, for political reasons, did not participate in the Committee in the past to do so now.

Cuba, which has been a staunch supporter of the legitimate cause of Palestine, has also systematically advocated, and continues to advocate, the withdrawal of Israel from the other occupied Arab territories. Just as we welcome the conclusion of agreements between Jordan and Israel, we support the legitimate demands of Syria that the Golan Heights be returned to it, and we call for the complete withdrawal of Israeli forces from occupied Lebanese territory, in fulfilment of Security Council resolution 425 (1978). We cannot feel wholly satisfied by the achievements made until that objective has been fully met; it will not be possible to say with complete certainty that progress is being made towards peace in the Middle East until the States of the region have recovered the occupied territories they claim, the return of which is an act of justice in accordance with the principles of the Charter and of international law.

We hope that this long-suffering region of the world, which has witnessed wars, desolation and death, will now see before it a new path of peace, without hegemony and with security and stability for all the peoples that live there, free of the use of force or the threat of its use. We hope that the peoples of the region will put an end to the conflict that has afflicted it for decades and that, on the basis of a just, comprehensive and lasting peace between the peoples of Israel and Palestine, they will be able to chart a course in the direction of progress, development and well-being.

Mr. MAKKAWI (Lebanon): As this is the first time I have addressed you, Sir, in your capacity as President of

the General Assembly, I would like to congratulate you on your assumption of this very important post. I am confident that under your wise and able leadership the Assembly will fine-tune its focus on the achievement of peace in the Middle East.

I would like also to express my delegation's appreciation to your predecessor, Mr. Stoyan Ganev, for presiding so ably over the affairs of the Assembly during its forty-seventh session.

Allow me also to thank the Secretary-General for his reports (A/48/522 and A/48/607) on the situation in the Middle East and for the just views he expresses therein. Lebanon is grateful to the Secretary-General for his consistent support and tireless efforts to promote peace in the region.

More than two years have passed since the Peace Conference on the Middle East was convened in Madrid. That historic initiative was based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and on the clear constructs of the "land for peace" formula. It was also based on the need for full implementation of Security Council resolution 425 (1978), on the basis of which Lebanon agreed to participate in the negotiations. As a result of Israel's failure to respect all United Nations resolutions pertaining to the Arab-Israeli conflict and the Israeli occupation of Lebanese territory, Lebanon committed itself to this process wholeheartedly, and we now look forward to the next round of bilateral negotiations in Washington, with the understanding that our endeavours will eventually lead to Israel's full respect for Lebanese sovereignty and territorial integrity.

The Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements recently signed by the Palestine Liberation Organization and the Government of Israel should be viewed as a first step down the long road towards the achievement of peace in the region. While the world is inspired by the possibility of peace on the Middle East horizon, we know that the people of southern Lebanon, East Jerusalem, the West Bank, Gaza and the Golan Heights experience little of this euphoria because they are still subjected on a daily basis to occupation, oppression, domination and the violation of their human rights. Furthermore, they will continue to suffer until Israel honours its obligations arising from scores of Security Council and General Assembly resolutions, the Charter of the United Nations and other instruments of international law, including the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949.

It is our understanding that the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements will lead to the transfer from Israel to the Palestinians of authority over East Jerusalem and all of the cities, towns and villages of the West Bank and Gaza. This is the bottom line if we wish to achieve a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the Middle East - a peace which cannot be attained unless the people of Palestine are granted their legitimate national rights.

Equally, we emphasize that the signing of the agreement in Washington will not achieve genuine peace unless there is substantive progress on the Lebanese and Syrian tracks of the Arab-Israeli negotiations, leading to full Israeli withdrawal from southern Lebanon and the Golan Heights. We stress the need for the United Nations to play a more active role in the current peace process, the success of which is dependent upon the implementation of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978).

I turn now to the internal conditions of Lebanon. I am pleased to report that my Government is making great progress in restoring peace and stability to the nation. The Lebanese Army and internal security forces are in full control north of the Israeli-occupied area, and our citizens enjoy peaceful living and travel throughout the free country. In cooperation with the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), the Lebanese Army is continuing to deploy additional units in order gradually to regain control over the UNIFIL area of operation. At the same time, Israel continues to thwart all attempts made by Lebanon to deploy its army up to its internationally recognized borders.

Israel's policy against Lebanon continues in spite of the fact that the Government and people of Lebanon have embarked upon three-year and 10-year reconstruction and development plans called "Horizon 2000", which are aimed at rebuilding the infrastructure of Beirut and the nation while competitively launching Lebanon into the twenty-first century. In the process of restoring the country to normality, we are optimistic about re-establishing our natural role as the Arab world's bastion of democracy, liberalism and free trade. I take this opportunity to thank the countries which have contributed to the success of our endeavours to this end through their aid and investments.

It is unfortunate that in the face of these optimistic developments Lebanon remains crippled by a painful thorn in its side, the Israeli occupation of parts of southern Lebanon and the western Bekaa. The international community has permitted this 15-year ordeal to continue in spite of Security Council resolutions 425 (1978) and 426 (1978), which created UNIFIL - in the words of paragraph 3 of Security Council resolution 425 (1978) -

"for the purpose of confirming the withdrawal of Israeli forces, restoring international peace and security and assisting the Government of Lebanon in ensuring the return of its effective authority in the area".

Since the convening of the International Peace Conference on the Middle East in Madrid 25 months ago, Israel's relationship with Lebanon has been conducted on two levels. As we sat face to face at the table in Madrid, shells came raining down on Lebanon. At the table in Washington we are presented with vague promises for future withdrawal, while on the ground we are subjected to bombardment for the slightest provocation. It is ironic that the so-called acts of provocation are, in fact, acts of Lebanese resistance on Lebanese soil and sanctioned under the provisions of Article 51 of the United Nations Charter.

Such was the case in late July and early August of this year, when the Israeli military killed 140 civilians, levelled scores of villages and caused the exodus of half a million people in response to Prime Minister Rabin's announcement that a major objective of his so-called Operation Accountability was the displacement of the civilian population and the flooding of Beirut with refugees. All of this aggression was in retaliation for the killing of 7 Israeli soldiers on Lebanese national soil.

If Israel continues to use the security of its northern border as a pretext for perpetuating the occupation of southern Lebanon, we would rationally argue that that policy only contributes to the disruption of security. Indeed, the test of time has proved that the only way to ensure regional security is by putting an end to occupation and the human-rights abuses that naturally accompany that practice. Simply put, the source of conflict between Israel and Lebanon is the Israeli occupation, which must end if there is to be peace in the region.

Having said that, I am sad to report that, pursuant to two years of negotiations on the Lebanese-Israeli track, Israel has not taken a single confidence-building measure relevant to my country, although it is well aware of one particular gesture that would mean so much to my people.

Every day we hope and pray for the release of hundreds of our citizens from Israeli prisons, including the Al-Khiyam Detention Centre in southern Lebanon, which is notorious for the infliction of physical and psychological torture on prisoners. Despite repeated appeals by the United Nations Commission on Human Rights and Amnesty International, in addition to demands made by the Lebanese Government and human-rights societies around the world, Israel refuses to release them. Furthermore, the Israeli authorities have for more than 8 years denied visits to those prisoners by the International Committee of the Red Cross or family members.

Today, therefore, I avail myself once more of this rostrum to reiterate my Government's appeal that these people be released, for their only crime is patriotism. Israel is in duty bound to grant this request in compliance with the relevant international treaties and conventions.

Today, as the Organization conducts its annual debate on the situation in the Middle East it is painfully aware that it has yet to rise to the aspirations of its founding fathers, who saw in the United Nations the potential to guarantee international law, peace and stability. By the same token, it is aware of the longevity and tenacity of this problem, which is the number-one obstacle to world peace. It is also aware that peace between Israel and its Arab neighbours has yet to be achieved despite limited progress on the Palestinian-Israeli track.

Bearing that in mind, we are duly alarmed by Israel's opposition to internationally recognized principles central to the achievement of a comprehensive peace settlement, over which discussion has been postponed to the final phase of negotiations on the Palestinian-Israeli track. These include Israeli withdrawal from all occupied territory, including Jerusalem, the dismantling of all settlements in these lands and the repatriation of Palestinian refugees to their native soil.

Here, I must mention that the matter of the repatriation of refugees is of crucial importance to Lebanon, which categorically rejects any attempt to settle permanently in Lebanon the 400,000 Palestinians who live on our national soil. This is because Lebanon is a very small State with a delicate population composition and scant economic resources. Furthermore, we are committed to the realization of the legitimate national aspirations of the Palestinian people and honour the Assembly's resolution 194 (III) of 1948, which affirms the right of the Palestinians to return to their homeland.

Allow me to conclude by saying that only one State in the region is in a position to alleviate the situation in the Middle East by implementing Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978). However, should Israel refuse to abide by these and other resolutions to the full letter of the law, then it is incumbent upon the United Nations to ensure their implementation. Since the United Nations has issued more than 80 resolutions and statements defending Lebanon against Israel, we encourage a broad role for the Organization in the Middle East peace process, including active participation in bilateral and multilateral negotiations.

Finally, let me add that Lebanon is a firm believer in peace and will be the first to benefit from the achievement of a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the region. Peace and prosperity are what we deeply desire because we have suffered for so long and wish to rebuild our nation. We appeal to the international community to bring an end to this occupation so that we may devote all of our efforts and energies to the reconstruction process.

Mr. CISSÉ (Senegal) *(interpretation from French)*: The signing on 13 September 1993 of the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements, including its annexes and Agreed Minutes, preceded by the mutual recognition between the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and the State of Israel, represents a historic turning-point in the troubled relations among the peoples of the Middle East.

The Senegalese Head of State, speaking as Chairman of the sixth Summit Meeting of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, hailed the advance made by the Palestinian and Israeli leaders as well as the outstanding work accomplished by all who had helped to achieve that important step towards the settlement of the Palestinian question and, hence, the Israeli-Arab conflict.

The debate we held at the beginning of this week when the Assembly considered agenda item 35, "Question of Palestine," gave a clear notion of the immense hope the international community places in the prospects for peace that have emerged in the region.

Thus, we believe that in this time of delicate and complex transition it is important not only to manifest and translate into concrete actions our unwavering support for the leaders of the region, who have committed themselves to the arduous path of peace, but also to reaffirm the special responsibility and role that remain incumbent upon the United Nations in the quest for a comprehensive, just and lasting solution to the conflict based on the principles set forth in the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly and the Security Council.

At this stage, which is crucial for the future of the region, the consolidation and continuation of the process that has begun also depends on several factors, all of them just as decisive as scrupulous respect, by the parties concerned, for the provisions of the Declaration of Principles and the realization of tangible progress in the other bilateral negotiations.

We welcome the Agreement between Israel and Jordan on the Common Agenda for their negotiations and we hope that such a dialogue will soon begin with Lebanon and Jordan, with a view to the total withdrawal by Israel from the territories illegally occupied in southern Lebanon and in the Golan Heights, including the Holy City of Jerusalem.

Among the factors that will, to a large extent, determine the progress towards peace, we consider it essential to emphasize also the need for respect by Israel of the obligations incumbent on it, as the occupying Power, to protect the civilian population of the occupied Arab territories.

Indeed, at a time when negotiations that are crucial for the future of the region are under way it is urgent to lower tensions and to abandon the policy of wanton repression, which only helps to whip up extremism.

From this point of view it is just as urgent that all of the countries concerned in the region should commit themselves resolutely to turning over a new page and to putting an end to hesitation, which only helps to strengthen the position of those who oppose the peace process.

Today the political achievements must soon be reflected in the field by an improvement in the living conditions of the populations of the region, especially the poorest among them living in the occupied Arab territories.

We welcome the results achieved in this regard by the International Donors Conference to Support Middle East Peace held in Washington on 1 October 1993, and initiatives taken by the Secretary-General to strengthen and broaden the effective work carried out by the United Nations and its specialized agencies.

Finally, we appeal to all countries and organizations which have committed themselves to supporting the Programme for reconstruction and development in Palestine to do so generously and in so doing to strengthen the chances for the achievement of a comprehensive, just and lasting peace for the benefit of all peoples in the region.

Mr. SARDENBERG (Brazil): It is with a clear sense of awareness of the important moment we are going through that my delegation is taking the opportunity to address the agenda item on "The situation in the Middle East". Brazil welcomed the epoch-making signing of the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization and hopes that it will pave the way to further significant political changes in the Middle East.

After many decades of military conflict and a political standstill in the region, we now have good grounds for hoping that one of the most complex questions faced by the international community may finally be giving way to

a comprehensive, just and lasting peace. Since 1947, when it adopted resolution 181 (II) on the partition of Palestine, the United Nations has been endeavouring to bring about peace in that troubled region. Although, in the past, progress was slow in coming, we are heartened by the fact that our efforts were not in vain. The relevant deliberations and resolutions of the General Assembly and the Security Council continue to provide an important framework for the parties.

More recently, the United Nations has been called to join, as a full participant, in the negotiation process initiated by the Madrid Conference. In the multilateral segment of these talks, the United Nations is assisting the parties to develop joint projects in vital areas such as those relating to refugees, water and economic cooperation.

The United Nations is well equipped to provide international cooperation to the occupied territories. Through the commendable work of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), which was created in 1949 by resolution 302 (IV), and whose mandate has been continuously renewed since then, we have at our disposal a good inventory of the needs of the region. Its Peace Implementation Programme and the report of the Secretary-General's task force on "Supporting the transition: an immediate response of the United Nations to the Interim Period in the West Bank and Gaza Strip" provide relevant guidelines for the international community's initiatives in the region.

The promotion of economic development and the enhancement of the quality of life in the occupied territories are essential steps in establishing an environment conducive to smooth implementation of the peace process. In particular, we welcome the results of the pledging Conference recently held in Washington at which substantial resources were raised to further international cooperation. The Declaration of Principles provides for a five-year period of transition beginning with the withdrawal of Israeli forces from the Gaza Strip and Jericho. This complex and critical process should be nurtured and preserved carefully. The fostering of economic ties between the Palestinian and Israeli communities will strengthen confidence between the parties and may lead to the creation of a commonwealth of interests that would overcome the past cycle of violence and hatred.

In this respect, we note with concern the renewal of acts of violence in the region, a regrettable development at variance with the direction of the process inaugurated by the September accord. Such deplorable acts should be promptly controlled by the authorities concerned. We call on the parties to exercise the utmost restraint and unreservedly to support efforts with a view to a peaceful settlement of the conflict that has long plagued the region.

Progress must be achieved in the other tracks of the negotiations as well. It is critically important that positive developments in one segment be reflected by similar achievements in the settlement of other disputes in the area. It is hoped that progress in the Jordanian-Israeli and Syrian-Israeli negotiations will further contribute to the peace settlement in the region.

Brazil is following attentively the unfolding of events in the region. My Government has just decided to grant diplomatic status to a special Palestinian delegation that is shortly to operate in Brazil, representing the Palestine Liberation Organization, as the sole and legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. Furthermore, we are prepared to participate actively in international cooperation efforts through the identification of technical, scientific, technological and services cooperation projects to be supported by the United Nations.

Finally, my delegation is pleased at indications that important progress has been achieved in the text of some of the draft resolutions on this issue that are before the General Assembly at its current session. We have noted with satisfaction that much of the language has been updated, the number of draft resolutions has been reduced, and the text of a positive resolution is being worked out by the parties concerned. We hope that these trends indicate that the past period of confrontation is indeed coming to a close and that a new climate of understanding and cooperation is dawning.

Mr. HUSLID (Norway): It gives me great pleasure and satisfaction to speak in the General Assembly today. The reason for this is, of course, that the debate this year is taking place in conditions quite different from those of previous years. For years debates on the situation in the Middle East were acrimonious, divisive and frustrating, and the situation itself seemed to have reached deadlock, with all the dangers that that implies.

This has now changed. The signing ceremony on the lawn of the White House in Washington on 13 September was a formal expression of a historic breakthrough, which has transformed the situation from one of frustration and fear into one of expectation and hope.

There are several actors whose contributions deserve mention here, but today I should like to pay special tribute to the parties involved - Israel and the PLO, in the persons of Prime Minister Rabin and Foreign Minister Peres and Chairman Arafat. It is true that Norway facilitated the

talks that led up to the breakthrough, but it was the parties, and the parties alone, who negotiated the accord and achieved the results. They all showed outstanding courage and vision, which history will not forget. More immediately, their courageous action will benefit thousands of men, women and children in the region, who may now hope for a life in peace and security.

However, this event does not only represent expectations and hope; it also entails obligations and responsibilities. We must now seize the opportunity to ensure that the first breakthrough is sustained and implemented on a broad front. The danger of setbacks is always present - a danger that has been well demonstrated even during the last few days. It is of paramount importance that the parties do their utmost to carry out faithfully the agreements they have entered into, in spite of opposition and attempts by extremist groups to derail the process. And the world community must support the parties in every way possible.

In this connection, it must be emphasized that, in order to succeed, the peace process must be accompanied and strengthened by economic development. This will involve external assistance from the world community so that the Palestinian people can be helped along their new road to self-government.

A start in the right direction was made by the Donors' Conference in Washington on 1 October, a Conference that resulted in pledges of around $2 billion. The Washington Conference was followed up by the meeting in Paris on 5 November of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee, which laid down the guidelines for future assistance and cooperation. There can be no doubt that economic assistance and cooperation are vital to the success of the peace process. Norway has pledged about $150 million for a five-year period as our contribution to the furthering of this process.

It is important that the follow-up process be adequately supported, strengthened and coordinated by the international community. In this connection, we were pleased to note the assurance given by the Secretary-General in his report to the Assembly that

> "The United Nations stands ready to lend its full support to the peace process"

and that the efforts already started

> "will intensify in the months ahead." *(A/48/607, para. 7)*

It is, of course, important that duplication of work be avoided and that the activities of the different agencies, organizations and funds complement each other in an efficient way. Here I have in mind the United Nations - the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Children's Fund and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East - in addition to the World Bank. These organizations have already played an important role, and they should continue to do so in the future. We also welcome the United Nations high-level task force that has been established to provide coordination and direction.

As Chair of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee, Norway is pleased that the United Nations has now joined that Committee as a fully associated member. In addition, the United Nations will join the secretariat of the Committee on a secondment basis.

The Israeli-Palestinian peace process is but an initial, though highly important, step towards achieving a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East. We must now also address the need to profit without delay from the momentum we have gained, in order to achieve progress in other areas of the Arab-Israeli negotiations. One tangible result has already been achieved, in the form of the agreement between Jordan and Israel on a common agenda, which was signed in Washington on 14 September. We welcome this step, which we hope will be followed by others and will inspire further steps by Israel and Lebanon and by Israel and Syria.

Clearly, further progress and solutions depend on the parties themselves. Neither third countries nor the United Nations nor any other organization can make peace on behalf of others; they can only facilitate the process.

It is important, furthermore, that in our work here at the United Nations we try to reflect the new developments in the Middle East. Thus, in our debates and resolutions, we should direct our efforts towards exploiting future possibilities. On the Norwegian side, we have tried to contribute by helping to prepare, in cooperation with other countries, a new draft resolution with this aim in view. This draft resolution, entitled "Middle East peace process", is before the Assembly in document A/48/L.32. Its purpose is not only to welcome the peace process but also to register what we hope will be the unanimous support of the United Nations membership for further efforts towards a comprehensive, just and lasting peace.

This draft resolution will not make all other resolutions redundant or irrelevant. We are fully aware that many important issues remain to be solved. However, we consider it vitally important that at this critical stage the world community express its full support through this

forum. Therefore, we hope that the draft resolution will be adopted unanimously.

The time has come when all the peoples of the Middle East may at long last hope to live their lives in peace and security. Peace and security are also prerequisites for economic development and prosperity - a prosperity that a large portion of the population of the region has so far been unable to enjoy, in spite of the abundance of natural resources. The challenges are formidable, and the stakes are high. But so also will be the rewards if the peace process can be successfully completed.

My Government stands ready to continue to play an active part in assisting this process.

Mr. KHARRAZI (Islamic Republic of Iran): Just a few days ago, the General Assembly discussed the question of Palestine, the most important and yet most controversial issue in the Middle East region. It needs to be addressed, discussed and attended to because the question of Palestine is not merely a transient conflict between two parties; rather, it is a question whose implications have captured the attention of the whole region for a very long time, mainly because of attitudes and policies of the occupying Power. The Zionist regime does not confine itself to occupying the holy land of Palestine and the violation of the basic human rights of the Palestinians. The Golan Heights and southern Lebanon continue to be under Israeli occupation.

Still worse, the Muslim people of southern Lebanon are the target of heavy bombardment and shelling on a continuous basis. It is astonishing how those who are fighting to liberate their land from occupation are called on to desist from doing so, while at the same time the aggressor is supported wholeheartedly by certain Western countries. What the people of southern Lebanon are doing is resisting aggression and occupation, which indeed deserves to be supported by the entire international community.

The Zionist regime has realized the benefit it can reap by trying to project international blame somewhere else. To that end, Israel has extensively capitalized on the situation by introducing an artificial threat to our region in order to divert the attention of the international community in general and the countries of the region in particular from the question of Palestine. Israel finds it useful to portray this artificial threat as a substitute for the now defunct communist scarecrow in order to receive special treatment from its patrons. It is a well-established fact that Israel is orchestrating a misinformation and propaganda campaign against others and is trying to foster discord, distrust and division among States in the region.

Unfortunately, the sources of instability and tension in the region have not been taken into account in dealing with the situation in the Middle East. Within the general framework of these sources of instability are persistent problems such as aggression and occupation on the one hand, and the perception of threat as a concept of national security - which gets us into questions of arms control and disarmament - on the other. In our view, peace, stability and mutual confidence can return to the Middle East and the holy land of Palestine through the full restoration of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and the withdrawal of occupying forces from other Arab lands, as well as serious treatment of the root causes of instability in the region.

The situation in the Middle East region is very volatile. The region has been the arena of many destructive conflicts over the last 40 years. Had the root causes of the problems in the region been dealt with appropriately, so many opportunities would not have been lost in the Middle East. The failure of the Security Council to address in earnest the crises in the Middle East and the Palestinian question is a sorrowful reflection of the prevailing preference for political interests over peace, security, international law and equity.

Noting the situation in the Middle East and the efforts that are being made by Israel to advance its offensive capabilities, the Islamic Republic of Iran is firmly committed to the establishment of the Middle East as a zone free from nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. In the light of the constant support of the United Nations for the establishment of such a nuclear-free zone - which was initiated by Iran in 1974 - it is necessary to take constructive and practical measures towards its establishment so that the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) can expand its verification system to cover all nuclear facilities in the Middle East. In the same line, as the Foreign Minister of the Islamic Republic of Iran stated in his remarks during the general debate earlier in this session,

> "what is really necessary, globally and particularly in the Middle East, is serious and genuine international cooperation for the comprehensive, non-selective, non-discriminatory, balanced and effective reduction of conventional arms. This may be realized, *inter alia*, through the reduction of military budgets, of weapons procurement and of the presence of foreign forces in different regions". *(Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-eighth Session, Plenary Meetings, 14th meeting, p. 24)*

In our view, until the root causes of the current critical situation in the area have been effectively dealt

with and until the IAEA is able to bring all nuclear facilities in the Middle East under its verification system, every State in the region will perceive its national security to be at great risk.

Let me say a few words regarding our immediate neighbourhood, the Persian Gulf region. We have already proposed the establishment of regional security and cooperation arrangements in the Persian Gulf; the outline of those arrangements was presented by my Foreign Minister to the forty-fifth session of the General Assembly. In our view, cooperation on the basis of respect for the principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity, the inviolability of international borders, non-resort to force in the settlement of disputes and non-interference in the internal affairs of other States could ensure security and stability in the Persian Gulf so that the countries in the area could pursue, in peace and tranquility, their national policies for development and prosperity.

Yesterday evening, the representative of Belgium made some unwarranted and irrelevant comments against my country. It is not my intention even to touch upon all the issues referred to by the representative of Belgium, let alone respond to them, since they either are irrelevant to the subject at hand or have already been dealt with in my statement. However, I wish to refer to one subject - namely, the case of the author of the infamous *Satanic Verses* - which needs some clarification.

Representatives are aware that what Salman Rushdie did was an insult to Islam and to more than 1 billion Muslims around the world. I wonder how those who shed crocodile tears for the so-called violation of freedom of expression can justify their support for this travesty of all norms and rules of ethics and decency and this flagrant abuse of the principle of freedom of expression. Blasphemy against any revealed religion cannot be justified, either morally or legally, on the basis of the right to freedom of thought, opinion or expression. It is indeed a most despicable act, which deserves universal condemnation. It should be clear by now that any attempt on the part of certain countries to portray the Salman Rushdie issue as a problem related solely to the Islamic Republic of Iran is an act of distortion.

Representatives are aware that it is not only Iran that has reacted to the blasphemy by Salman Rushdie: all Islamic countries have condemned this apostasy and deliberate attempt to malign Islam and venerated Islamic personalities. In this regard, the relevant paragraph in the resolution adopted by the Eighteenth Conference of Islamic Foreign Ministers reads as follows:

"The Islamic countries strongly condemn the blasphemous book *The Satanic Verses*, whose author they regard as an apostate."

Mr. SNOUSSI (Morocco) *(interpretation from French):* The General Assembly is today considering the agenda item entitled "The situation in the Middle East" in a new international environment that offers very encouraging prospects for a settlement of the Israeli-Arab conflict. My country is pleased that the wall of mistrust between the protagonists on the Middle East scene is finally beginning to crumble.

The Middle East conflict, at the heart of which is the question of Palestine, has been moving towards a negotiated settlement ever since the Madrid Conference began. Thus, the Conference, which was convened to find a solution based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), has recently borne fruit with the mutual recognition by the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and Israel, the signing between those two parties, on 13 September 1993 in Washington, D.C., of the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements, and the Agreement between Israel and Jordan on the Common Agenda, on 14 September 1993.

My country, which welcomes these very positive developments, pays a well-deserved tribute to those responsible, who we hope will make up for lost time. It is crucial that the process, which has taken an irreversible tack, satisfy legitimate aspirations and bring about the calm atmosphere necessary for us to address ourselves together to the strengthening of peace and the development of the region.

The Declaration of Principles between the PLO and Israel, which is a decisive first step in the dynamics of peace, has given rise, as we all know, to legitimate hope among the peoples of the Middle East and the international community in general. It is the prerequisite for a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the question of Palestine based on international legality and respect for the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people. We hope therefore that the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations on the modalities of self-government will be rapidly crowned with concrete and satisfactory results and thus avoid any worsening of the situation in the territories. The deterioration of the situation in the occupied territories, which we deplore, should motivate the parties concerned to act responsibly and intensify their actions aimed at giving concrete form on the ground to commitments undertaken, thereby overcoming skepticism and frustration.

Since a just, comprehensive and lasting settlement of the question of Palestine will inevitably have a beneficial impact on the peace process in the region, we cannot but welcome the holding of the Donors Conference on 1 October in Washington, D.C. to support the process under way and open new horizons for Palestine and the other countries of the region, with peace finally restored.

Furthermore, we earnestly hope for a positive outcome of the Lebanese-Israeli negotiations on the implementation of Security Council resolution 425 (1978) and for Syrian-Israeli negotiations on the restoration of the Golan Heights to Syrian sovereignty. We hope also that the good will and foresight of the parties will help promote a constructive and useful dialogue.

The purpose of the multilateral negotiations, which are the corollary to the bilateral negotiations and which Morocco is participating in and has consistently supported for several years, is to strengthen confidence in the region in the establishment of a positive and genuine peace among the parties, which should be bound by relations of mutually advantageous cooperation. The achievement of positive results in this respect will no doubt depend on the easing of the political climate.

The United Nations has made a significant contribution to the establishment of peace in the region. In so far as it remains the embodiment of international legality, which will govern a final solution to the Middle East conflict, our Organization should continue to shoulder its responsibilities fully until the Palestinian people regains its legitimate rights and neighbouring countries can henceforth live in peace. The essential principles laid down in the Organization's many resolutions on this matter should continue to guide our quest for a final solution. Those principles are, in particular, respect for the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people; Israel's withdrawal from the occupied territories, including Al-Quds, whose status should be preserved; the return of all deportees; and freedom for all the detained persons.

The United Nations has an indispensable role to play at every stage of the peace process. This active role of the Organization, in bilateral and multilateral negotiations alike, should extend to the economic, social, cultural and humanitarian spheres.

The United Nations should also endeavour to mobilize, and heighten the awareness of, the international community with a view to establishing the future Palestinian national authority and infrastructures. In this connection, we welcome the initiative taken by the Secretary-General to establish a high-level task force to ensure an integrated approach to the problems of the economic and social development of the occupied territories, as well as the naming of a resident coordinator for the region as part of the implementation of the Washington Declaration of Principles.

My country will spare no effort to continue to contribute to the work of peace in the Middle East on the basis of dialogue and respect for everyone's rights, legitimate interests and identity. This means that we support a true peace which would outlaw the accumulation of armaments, a peace which would ensure that cooperation, development and prosperity, without mistrust, confrontation and violence, prevail.

In conclusion, we should like to thank the Secretary-General for his very timely report (A/48/607), and we must also mention the invaluable support of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, under the active leadership of Ambassador Cissé of Senegal, and the praiseworthy role of the officials of the United Nations Division for Palestinian Rights.

The PRESIDENT: I now call on the representative of the United Kingdom, who wishes to speak in exercise of the right of reply.

May I remind members that, in accordance with General Assembly decision 34/401, statements in the exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. SCHROEDER (United Kingdom): I have listened to the remarks just made by the Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran. I need hardly say that my Government does not accept the points he makes with regard to the author Salman Rushdie.

The PRESIDENT: I should like to inform members that the Assembly will consider draft resolutions to be submitted under agenda item 34 at a later date, to be announced in the *Journal*.

PROGRAMME OF WORK

THE PRESIDENT: I should like to inform members that the General Assembly will take action on draft resolution A/48/L.28 on the question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council tomorrow morning, Friday, 3 December, as the third item.

The meeting rose at 12.55 p.m.